Social Work Associate Practice Programme

A Children's Improvement Board
Reference Document

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Alex Chard

Phil Abbott

Marc Radley

Trish Hafford-Letchfield

Peter Hawkins

Mike Pinnock

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Introduction

The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) have been working to improve performance in children's services through development of the Social Work Associate Practice Programme (SWAPP), a programme to support front line managers in practice improvement in safeguarding and children's care.

Following the decision by the DfE to withdraw funding from the CIB it was decided that this Reference Guide which had already been commissioned was a valuable document and should still be produced. This reflects the fact that regions and authorities are likely to continue with the model. There is also much of the content that is more broadly applicable within the context of peer support and peer challenge which is also likely to continue within the regions. A great deal of the content is also useful in thinking more broadly about how children's services are led and managed.

There are two main audiences for the reference document. The first of these audiences are frontline managers who will be SWAPPed to provide support between local authorities in order to learn and disseminate best practice in the management of child protection and care services. The second of the two audiences are the more senior managers and other staff who will enable or manage these programmes.

Simply moving managers around the system and hoping some good practice will rub off is unlikely to achieve significant change. It will be important that the frontline managers who are part of these SWAP programmes are helped in understanding the task they are being asked to undertake. It will be equally important that the organisations create suitable conditions in which frontline managers can create change. Consequently the twin aims of the reference manual are:

- Helping frontline managers understand the tasks they are being asked to undertake and to help them understand how they will go about it;
- Helping organisations create the conditions to support frontline managers in this role.

What's in a name? We are referring to this as a Reference Document rather than for example using the term manual or toolbox. This is an important distinction reflecting the fact that there is a recognition that prescriptive national guidance can inhibit local practice and often fails to take account of the variety of conditions that exist in local contexts. It also recognises that professionals need to use their judgement to develop such programmes to meet local needs. So this is a guide to inform local development rather than an instruction manual.

Underpinning the reference document is the understanding that the national and local contexts in which social services are delivered to vulnerable children has changed:

- Significant reductions in the funding of the range of agencies that deliver services;
- The impact of the Munro Review and moves towards a more systemic approach to the management of children's services;

- A recognition that prescriptive guidance and process management limits the ability of services to flexibly meet diverse need;
- An understanding that we need to ensure that vulnerable children receive effective services from across a range of agencies (the child's journey);
- How we monitor, quality assure and inspect services needs to based on outcomes and the child's experience of their journey.

In other words the system conditions have changed and we need to change how we run and manage organisations in response to that change. The SWAPP Reference Document is designed to help local areas improve that process at the front-line. The Reference Document is intended to assist with local thinking and also provide access to further practical resources that can also help to further develop that thinking.

Whilst not located in a single model a thread that runs throughout, is the need to recognise complexity and think systemically about the issues local areas face.

SWAPP Purpose and Aims

The Social Work Associate Practice Programme (SWAPP) is intended to address the imperative to develop a sustainable approach to improving the overall quality of frontline social work practice in England. It is recognised that some of the best practice anywhere in the world exists in children's services in England. However there is also significant practice that is not of the required standard. In many authorities practice has in recent inspections been judged by Ofsted as only adequate or as inadequate. The sector challenge is how to disseminate the skills and knowledge of those areas that deliver good or outstanding services in order to help improve practice in all authorities. This Reference Document is intended to assist the regions to develop peer-to-peer support as a key sector led improvement response.

The Challenge

Continuing resource constraints, the challenges arising from Ofsted inspections and the shortage of suitably experienced and trained colleagues at team leader level mean that most peer to peer support is at the level of a few days or through telephone conferences or workshops. Whilst these limited engagements have their place, there is an identified gap in more substantial secondments from those with good or better practice, this is the gap that SWAPP has the potential to fill.

Unfortunately, to date obtaining peer to peer support over a medium term period from social work team leaders with expertise in safeguarding, remains a rarity. Indeed it is identified as one of the main barriers to delivering effective early help and targeted support. The challenge is how to obtain the capacity to do this in a hard pressed service environment where outstanding team leader practitioners remain a guarded resource. Previous experience illustrates that simply throwing money at the problem is not enough, although for it to happen and to be effective it will require regions to provide or divert resources. Regional colleagues are therefore invited to help develop and deliver the SWAPP proposal in order to address this.

The Aims of SWAPP

The assumption underlying SWAPP is that there are excellent team leaders working in all authorities. Those working in inadequate or adequate authorities would benefit considerably from secondment opportunities to those where performance has been inspected as good or outstanding. Similarly, with the right role, effective support and freed from casework responsibilities, a strong team leader from a good or outstanding authority could prove a considerable asset as part of a practice improvement programme in an authority where practice is weaker. The SWAP programme promotes and facilitates such secondments of safeguarding social work team leaders. The aims of the SWAP programme are:

- To improve social work practice in safeguarding and care, particularly for those councils where practice is inadequate or only adequate;
- To provide a means for good or better social work practice to be shared on a systematic basis in a more intensive

manner over a period of months;

- To increase the shared understanding and expertise within the sector of the status, causes and effective improvement approaches to social work practice through secondments;
- To increase the cadre of team leader level social workers with skills and experience in peer support.

Sustained peer-to-peer support within a framework of social work reform and professional improvement would enable greater influence, follow up and impact on front line delivery. This is more likely to be successful if driven by senior management authority and managed as part of the practice oversight of Principal Social Workers.

Using the Reference Document

In the varied topography of professional practice there is a high hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The practitioner must choose. Should he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to the prevailing standards of rigour or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?

Donald A. Schön The Reflective Practitioner (1987)

This Reference Document is designed to be used by many different people with different roles. It provides advice to those who are acting as SWAPP Managers and to those who are responsible for managing those placements. It also provides advice to elected members, senior managers within children's services, to corporate managers within local authorities and to regional bodies associated with the improvement of child safeguarding and care. It's purpose is to help deal with the swamp, the messy reality of management and practice.

The material has been contributed by a team of authors who have drawn on a wide range of both theoretical and practical expertise. Each has focused on what it is that needs to be done, how it might be approached, and why those views have been taken. For those who wish to study further there are ample references to source materials.

The approach that all the writers have taken is that you need to be aware of the whole complexity in order to achieve improvement. It is not only a question of addressing front line practice and management, but also all of those factors which impinge on the effectiveness of the service. Merely addressing some elements may not lead to sustainable progress.

However, any reader should be able to dip into this document and focus upon a particular element. In doing so you should appreciate that each element is linked to the whole. In taking the reflections you may gain from this document into planning and actions, please remember that there are a range of things that can be done and a range of ways of doing each. There is no one size that fits all. No simple template is provided for you to follow. However you should be able to see how each action can be related back to the concepts with which they are linked to check the overall cohesion in what you are endeavouring to do.

Here are some suggestions as to what you might usefully focus on in the document:

Elected Representatives:

• The Munro Review and Inspection sections - for an overview of what might be involved;
• Outcomes – 'the difference' We Want to Make, Engaging Service Users and Communities in Shaping Service Delivery, and Evaluating SWAPP as a Catalyst for Service Improvement – to gain an overview of what the service is striving to

achieve and how to assess and support it;
• Creating Double Loop Learning – To appreciate what the organisation needs to do to move forward.

Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services and other Senior Managers:

• The sections identified above:
• Implications for Frontline Management, Leading and Managing in the New Local Context particularly, Thinking Systemically and Managing in Complexity - Working with Emergence – For the impact on managing the organisation;
• SWAPP as a Learning Intervention, Influencing Culture and Contexts, HR Practice and Service Improvement and the sections on Evaluating and Quality Assuring the SWAPP – To understand the guidance given which may have implications for what you as an individual might need to do.

Managers Responsible for SWAPP Managers:

• The Preparation of First Line Managers, and The Organisational Context – To understand the SWAPP Managers potential remit and what they might be involved in.

SWAPP Managers:

Will benefit from reading the whole document to gain a full understanding of the context for what they are about to embark upon. They may then need to focus on The Preparation of First Line Managers, and The Organisational Context.

Support Services Managers – Finance, HR, IT, Legal and so forth:

The Munro Review, Outcomes – 'the difference' We Want to Make, Managing in Complexity - Working with Emergence, and appropriate sections from Using Information Systems to Support Improvement, Learning and Outcomes and Creating a Culture of Learning and Success – To gain an understanding of what needs to be different in the provision of safeguarding and child care services so they can support their colleagues in the most effective way.

We have included opposite a spray diagram of the content. What we hope this provides is an overview of the content to help you to decide on the areas that are of interest to. It could also be used as an aid to discuss areas you need to consider if implementing a SWAPP programme.

Introduction

Using the Reference Document

The National Context
- The Munro Review
- The Social Work Task Force
- The Professional Capabilities Framework
- Inspection

Preparation of First Line Managers
- How to Help as Opposed to Managing
- Observing the Organisation the Cultural Dimensions
- Working Within Another Organisation
- Overcoming Defensive Responses
- Acting as a Consultant and Change Agent
- Enabling Your Own Professional Development
- The Coaching Relationship
- Creating Reflective Space for the Secondee
- Effective Models of Supervision

The Organisational Context
- Systems Conditions for SWAPP Success
- The Commissioning Process and Agreement
- Managing the SWAPP
- Evaluating the SWAPP

Emerging Evidence From Peer Review Evaluation

Social Work Associate Practice Programme Reference Document

SWAPP Purpose and Aims

Leading and Managing in the New Local Context
- Implications for Service Management
- Thinking Systemically Seeing Patterns and Connections
- Managing in Complexity Working With Emergence
- The Roles and Responsibilities of the Leadership Team
- Managing High Quality Social Work Practice
- Outcomes – 'the difference' We Want to Make
- Engaging Service Users and Communities in Shaping Service Delivery

Creating a Culture of Learning and Success
- SWAPP as a Learning Intervention
- Preparing the Workforce for Experimentation
- Influencing Culture and Contexts
- HR Practice and Service Improvement
- Links to the Role of the Principal Social Worker
- Links to the role of Leadership Teams and Key Groups
- Development of the Regional SWAPP models

Using Information Systems to Support Improvement, Learning and Outcomes
- The Role of the SWAPP Manager in Using Information Systems
- Influencing How Systems Need to be Adapted and Changed
- Working with Representations of the Whole System

Using SWAPP to Create Strategic Learning and Improve Services
- Creating Double Loop Learning
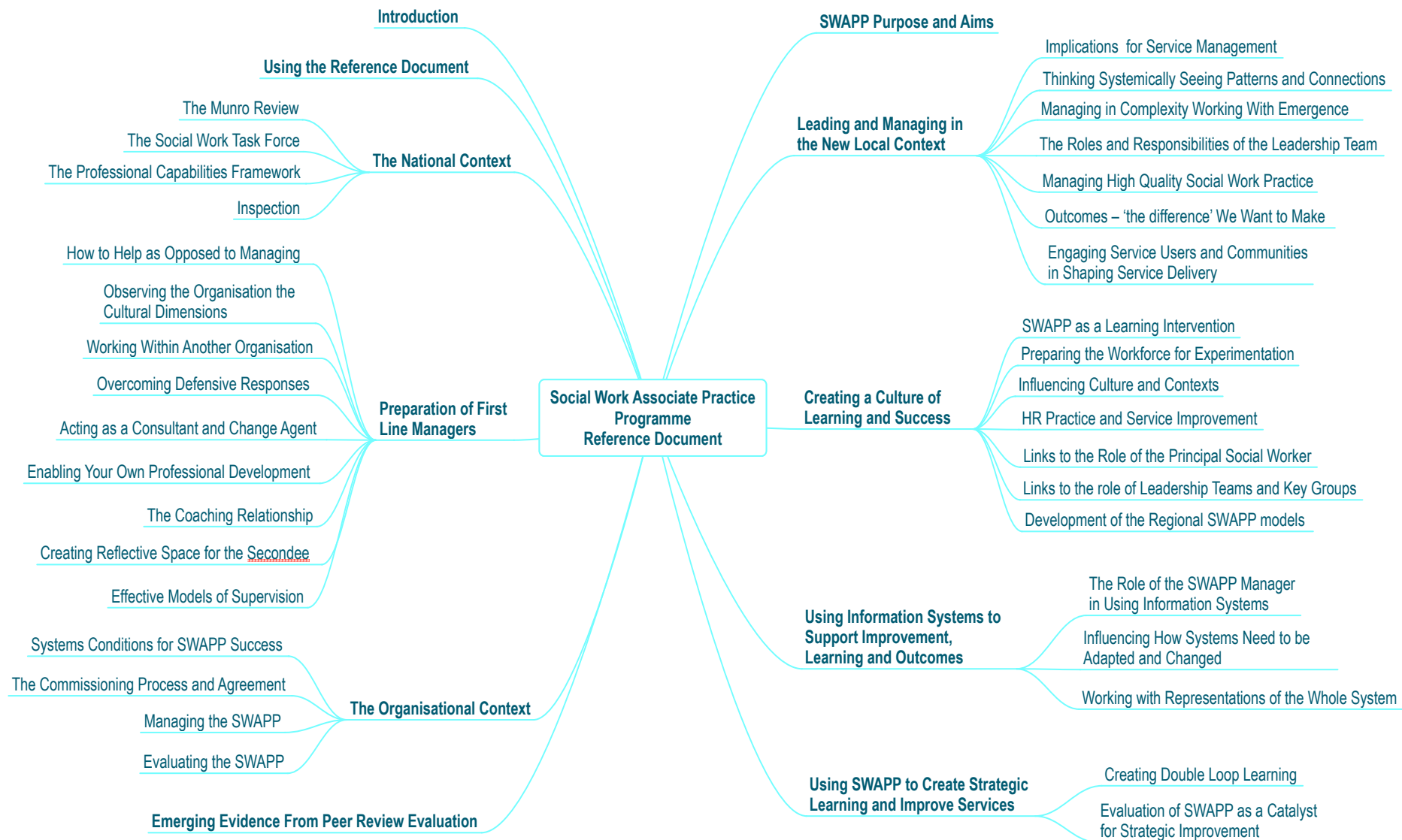- Evaluation of SWAPP as a Catalyst for Strategic Improvement

Figure 1: The SWAPP Reference Document Contents

The National Context

The Munro Review

A Child-Centred System - The Local Strategic Response

This is an opportunity not to set the 'right' system in stone, but to build an adaptive, learning system which can evolve as needs and conditions change. It is only by seeking well balanced flexibility that the system can hope to retain its focus on helping children and families, rather than simply coming to serve its own bureaucratic ends.

Munro (2011)

The Munro Review of Child Protection applied a complex adaptive systems approach to review the child protection system in England. The review used this analysis to argue that a range of drivers, including well-intended reforms, have produced a defensive system that has created obstacles to achieving the primary objective of protecting children.

Munro's approach is different from previous reviews, even exciting in the possibilities she tries to create, both through the application of systems thinking and because of the child centred approach that she has adopted.

The review challenged the wisdom of extensive national guidance. Given the coalition Government policy driver to scale back central prescription it would be paradoxical to expect detailed guidance on how local areas should respond. We have recently seen the significant scaling back of national guidance through the publishing of Working Together (2013). This is a very

different approach requiring local areas to respond to fit their own local context rather than a one-size-fits-all national policy position.

Munro made 15 recommendations underpinned by a systems analysis. Her plea that the recommendations are not *cherry picked* will be driven by a concern that what is proposed is a systemic change and that piecemeal reform is unlikely to succeed. Munro comments that:

I hope that the result will be a recalibration of the whole system around the immediate needs of the individual children and families that it seeks to serve.

Consequently it seems essential that her reports and the recommendations are viewed and implemented taking full account of the systems perspective from which they were written. The nub of these changes are about reducing centralised control and returning professional decision making to the local system. To be effective, the changes Munro is proposing will need to be locally driven.

Given that responsibility for protecting children is held by local authorities and their partners, it is perhaps not surprising that analysis of the 15 recommendations (see diagram below), shows that the main responsibility for implementing the Munro Review falls to local authorities. One of the key recommendations is that:

Local authorities and their partners should start an ongoing process to review and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered, drawing
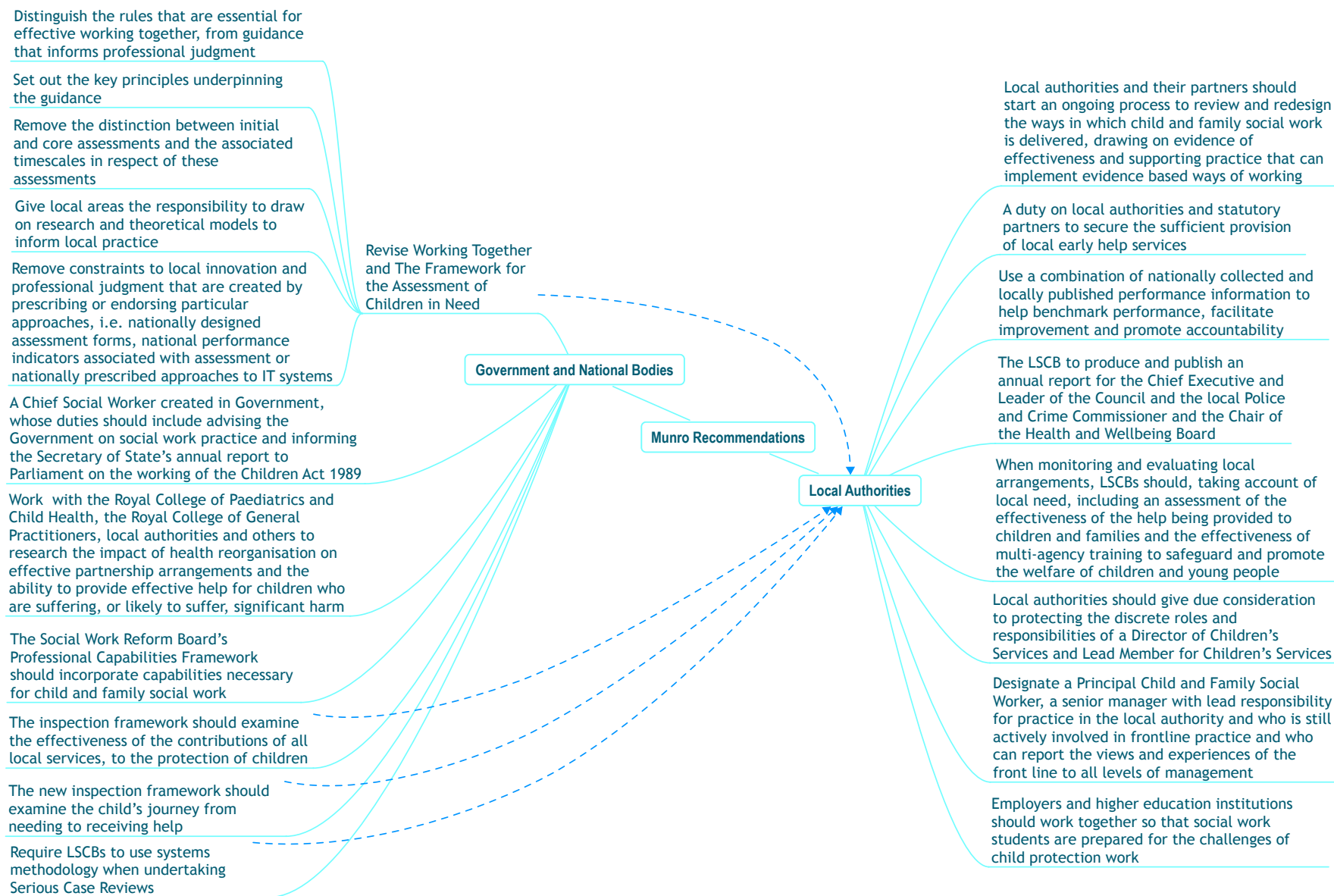
The Munro Review Recommendations

Distinguish the rules that are essential for effective working together, from guidance that informs professional judgment

Set out the key principles underpinning the guidance

Remove the distinction between initial and core assessments and the associated timescales in respect of these assessments

Give local areas the responsibility to draw on research and theoretical models to inform local practice

Remove constraints to local innovation and professional judgment that are created by prescribing or endorsing particular approaches, i.e. nationally designed assessment forms, national performance indicators associated with assessment or nationally prescribed approaches to IT systems

A Chief Social Worker created in Government, whose duties should include advising the Government on social work practice and informing the Secretary of State's annual report to Parliament on the working of the Children Act 1989

Work with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners, local authorities and others to research the impact of health reorganisation on effective partnership arrangements and the ability to provide effective help for children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm

The Social Work Reform Board's Professional Capabilities Framework should incorporate capabilities necessary for child and family social work

The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, to the protection of children

The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help

Require LSCBs to use systems methodology when undertaking Serious Case Reviews

Revise Working Together and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need

Government and National Bodies

Munro Recommendations

Local Authorities

Local authorities and their partners should start an ongoing process to review and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered, drawing on evidence of effectiveness and supporting practice that can implement evidence based ways of working

A duty on local authorities and statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services

Use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability

The LSCB to produce and publish an annual report for the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

When monitoring and evaluating local arrangements, LSCBs should, taking account of local need, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families and the effectiveness of multi-agency training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people

Local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of a Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services

Designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who is still actively involved in frontline practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management

Employers and higher education institutions should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work

Figure 2: The Munro Review Recommendations

on evidence of effectiveness of helping methods where appropriate and supporting practice that can implement evidence based ways of working with children and families.

A central argument that Munro develops is that a managerialist approach has been one of the major drivers that have distorted the system and caused it to lose sight of the key objective:

This review has considered a range of academic and research evidence which suggests that the focus of performance indicators and targets on specific aspects of process as opposed to practice, has skewed and misdirected local priorities. This has obscured attention from whether or not children, young people and their families are receiving the help they need and that makes a difference.

This has important implications for developing management thinking and reclaiming a focus on the purpose of the system, helping and protecting children. In a critique of managerialism Chard and Ayre (2010), we commented that:

The assumption that workers are fundamentally self seeking and need to be motivated by extrinsic managerialist drivers may be felt to have limited validity in contexts in which professional values and an ideology of public service have traditionally played an important motivational role. Performance measures are likely to distort objectives and disrupt the delivery of high quality services because of their tendency to focus on process not practice.

Munro (2011) who cited the above then commented that:

From the perspective of the front line, this has contributed to many feeling that they are working in a compliance culture

where meeting performance management demands becomes the dominant focus rather than meeting the needs of children and their families.

In that chapter we recognised that the primary motivation for the social care workforce was to deliver quality services and argued for a move away from a managerialist response towards learning or competent organisations that harnessed this motivation. This positions managers to respect the motivation of the workforce and create the conditions for optimum practice. This approach also recognises that teams can develop knowledge and know-how to improve the whole of the service response process.

In her analysis of the impact of managerialism, Munro describes much of the current approach as technocratic. In response she advocates a socio-technical response, arguing that:

A 'technocratic' approach assumes that a given analytical problem is clear, with consensus about aims and that implementation of recommendations will be via hierarchical chains of command. In contrast, a 'socio-technical' approach assumes the individuals involved and how they work together are just as important as any analytical problem. There is no presumption about consensus regarding the problem: aims might be hard to agree on, and implementing change may require support from a range of partners.

This reflects systems thinking around complexity and what are referred to as Wicked Problems or even Messes, Ackoff (1979). Viewing complex social problems as Munro describes them, has profound implications for strategic groups and how they go about their governance role.

Munro recognised the importance of Local

Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and sought to strengthen their role including through providing an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families. This is now reflected in Working Together 2013.

As local systems are re-developed, the LSCB will have a vital role in creating and listening to feedback loops and using these to continually help the local system to learn how to learn, Senge (1990). This will need to be linked to promoting double loop learning that challenges underlying assumptions and defensive routines.

In moving away from a managerialist approach, Munro also recommends that one of the required responses is the creation of learning systems:

> This review recommends a radical reduction in the amount of central prescription to help professionals move from a compliance culture to a learning culture, where they have more freedom to use their expertise in assessing need and providing the right help.

Implementing the intent of Munro and creating learning systems will require a range of changes, perhaps the most challenging of which will be the rolling back of the command and control culture which has been embedded in public services for over three decades. The concept of learning organisations was promoted by Peter Senge in his book the Fifth Discipline. Whilst first published in 1990, this remains a seminal text on organisational learning as does the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön who Munro draws upon in promoting double-loop learning. However, much of the literature on organisational learning centres on single organisations, one of the challenges of implementing Munro is that it will require pan-organisational learning, nationally and locally.

One of the systemic underpinnings of learning organisations is that they draw on and develop the practice wisdom of the workforce. This is reflected in Munro's recommendation to establish a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, a senior manager … who is still actively involved in frontline practice. This recommendation also supports the systems concept of feedback loops and again promotes the learning organisation:

> The importance of having good feedback loops, in order to detect and respond to emerging imbalances and problems in the system, underpins this review's interest in making recommendations that support the development of the children's social care into a 'learning organisation'.

A key to creating learning organisations is developing management teams who are able to be critically self-reflective, creating an environment where managers are able to constructively challenge their own practice and the practice of colleagues. Achieving this requires the identification and removal of the negative defensive routines that inhibit organisational learning.

Creating a learning organisation also requires the engagement of staff at all levels. There is a need to create processes that ensure that front line managers and staff are engaged and active in promoting cultural change and change in how services are delivered.

The qualitative and often tacit knowledge staff have of practice needs to be harvested in order to advise strategic planning and the understanding of strategic groups such as the LSCB of the reality of practice. One of the central organisational processes that can play a central role in this is supervision (Evans and Chard 2011).

Investing in front line managers will be a

significant part of the change agenda:

A move from a compliance to a learning culture will require those working in child protection to be given more scope to exercise professional judgment in deciding how best to help children and their families. It will require more determined and robust management at the front line to support the development of professional confidence.

Taking a systems perspective also allows organisations to begin to move from managing the system in parts, to managing the totality of a system. Within child protection this is of course a pan-organisational responsibility. Munro has identified the importance of the inter-agency responsibility to manage preventative services and the referral process to children's social care:

There appears, therefore, to be scope for managing this judgment stage better and keeping more families out of the child protection system. This would not only reduce cost but reduce the distress families experience in being investigated.

Munro identifies, the quality of the informal relations between workers as significant in managing the front door of children's social care:

The value of these informal but strategic conversations is that they enable professionals to exchange ideas without needing to enter formal proceedings. It is these informal relationships between different types of expert which the review holds to be crucial to improving early help.

Conclusion

• It is essential that the Munro Review reports and the recommendations are viewed through the lens of systems thinking and that the reports and the final recommendations are considered in their entirety;
• In responding to Munro, it will be essential that local areas also take a systems or systemic approach to service reform;
• The challenge of taking such an approach should not be underestimated, it requires knowledge of systems thinking and of how to create and sustain learning organisations. It will also require significant cultural changes in how services are led and managed.

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The Social Work Task Force

The Social Work Task Force undertook a systematic review of the state of social work in England (DCSF, 2009) and made 15 recommendations which underpin a comprehensive programme of reform. The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), supported by Government, was set up to drive these subsequent reforms resulting from the in-depth critique of current problems and changing policy expectations for social work. Alongside the Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro, 2010), a number of building blocks and practical tools have been identified which need to come together to ensure that any stability, safety and improvement is developed systemically and takes account of capacity and the need for effective leadership and collaboration.

One of the most positive outcomes has been the restatement and assertion of the value of good social work and its importance to society. As a single profession, social work should have confidence in its own identity, purpose, knowledge and skills, its ability to innovate and adapt, alongside the recognition of how it can make a sustained difference to the lives of those it works with.

The Task Force facilitated a much needed look at the weaknesses in the system towards identifying which essential improved working conditions were vital for the success of social work. The 15 recommendations embodied a number of these success factors for example, in relation to recruitment and retention; resources to support the frontline; training and education; stronger leadership; and actions needed to elicit and maintain a positive and supportive relationship with the public for the social work role.

The College of Social Work (http://www.tcsw.org.uk/home/) is a membership organisation and the appointed voice of the profession to policy makers and the media. The College aims to uphold the standards for the profession and to support and enable its members to meet those standards.

At a local level, the implications of the reforms have a strong focus on the pressures and risks associated with social work which need to be fully understood and managed at all levels of the organisation and not just absorbed by those in the front line. Finally, other sources of knowledge and evidence which support social work besides policy imperatives and public perception which we may have much more control over; involve making a fresh and on-going commitment to more integrated use of research and a well-developed framework for continuing professional development.

Social workers need time to use professional skills and carry out the analysis and reflection that leads to good judgements and makes best use of resources. Secondly, listening and responding to those who use our services in a way that ensures being in touch with frontline practice dilemmas means that how we assess performance of social work to ensure that the completion of processes and collection of evidence against performance indicators in not done at the expense of outcomes for service users but is actually used to inform the development of quality services.

Before moving on to the detail, it may be useful for you to familiarise yourself with the key recommendations of The Social Work Task Force and perhaps make some notes as to how these are relevant to your own role. These may be useful for when we come to look at the implications for managing high performing teams and frontline practice later on.

The diagram below represents the landscape within which social work is currently located in relation to the changes and initiatives described so far. Above the cross, we have
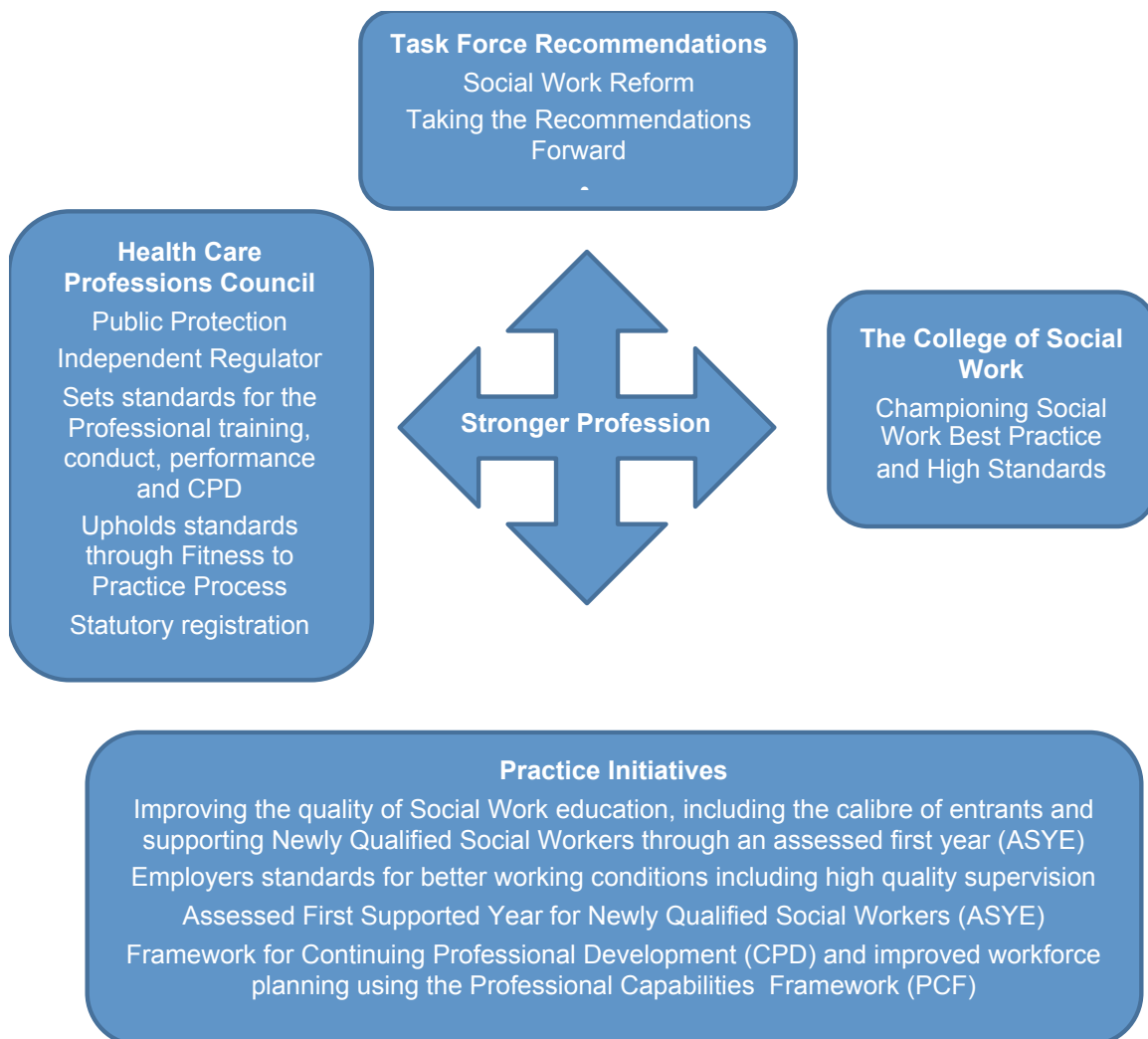
the strategic policy drivers and context. To the right and left we can see two key bodies charged with taking these forward; firstly the Health Care Professions Council which delivers the statutory framework for driving up standards and regulating social work and secondly The College of Social Work which acts as a champion through active membership and the capturing of good practice guidance. In the final area of the diagram, we have examples of some of the practice initiatives which provide systems and frameworks for improving key areas of staff development and support, essential to improving quality of social work in the organisational setting.

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Task Force Recommendations

Social Work Reform

Taking the Recommendations Forward

Health Care Professions Council

Public Protection

Independent Regulator

Sets standards for the Professional training, conduct, performance and CPD

Upholds standards through Fitness to Practice Process

Statutory registration

Stronger Profession

The College of Social Work

Championing Social Work Best Practice and High Standards

Practice Initiatives

Improving the quality of Social Work education, including the calibre of entrants and supporting Newly Qualified Social Workers through an assessed first year (ASYE)

Employers standards for better working conditions including high quality supervision

Assessed First Supported Year for Newly Qualified Social Workers (ASYE)

Framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and improved workforce planning using the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Figure 3: The New Landscape for Social Work

The Professional Capabilities Framework

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) elaborates the areas of ongoing development throughout a social work career. The framework can also be applied to a social work organisation defining the range and ability to perform appropriate actions involving management and strategy.

Organisational capability can be understood as the sum of service capacity and ability. The PCF thus places an emphasis on developing professional social work knowledge, expertise and quality of practice across the workforce. It develops social work abilities and aspirations over 9 dimensions. In summary these can be described as:

- Professionalism: Illustrates the internationally recognised profession defined by law, accountable to the professional regulator
- Values and Ethics: Confirms how Social workers are obligated to conduct themselves ethically.
- Diversity: Shows how Social workers understand diversity that characterises human experience and are critical to forming identity.
- Rights Justice and Economic Wellbeing: Shows how social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality.
- Knowledge: Confirms how social work knowledge is based on understanding psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people.
- Critical Reflection and Analysis: Illustrates how Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment.
- Intervention and Skills: Shows how Social workers engage and work alongside individuals, families, groups and communities
- Contexts and Organisations: Confirms

how Social workers are informed by and are pro-active about the challenges and opportunities in changing social contexts and constructs.
- Professional Leadership: Indicates how social work practice evolves through contributions in practice research, supervision, evaluation of services, management and leadership teams.

The full interactive text of the PCF can be accessed via The College of Social Work website.

In addition to the PCF the Social Work Reform Board articulated Standards for Employers, Reforms in Practice Learning and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) an important driver of implementation will be a deepening, more consistent partnership between universities and employers. In particular, to consider wider strategic engagement about the future of the workforce and service application of research findings. As well as to support joint research in service and practice settings to grow the evidence base embedded in real world challenges. This approach to implementing the PCF provides an important context for SWAPP programmes.

The PCF can be seen as broadening the basis for understanding performance of the social work enterprise articulating dimensions which can be associated with 'equity', 'efficacy', 'elegance' and 'excellence' in addition to traditional 'efficiency', 'effectiveness' and 'economy' performance perspectives. These aspects begin to introduce a paradigm shift for managers of social work in the future recognising complexity of the organisation and its environment in line with business organisations of the 21st century. Sargut and McGrath (2011) comment:

> *Managing a business today is fundamentally different than it was just 30*

years ago. The most profound difference, we've come to believe, is the level of complexity people have to cope with.

Further, Sargut and McGrath suggest that organisation and management development tools have not kept up:

Collectively we know a good deal about how to navigate complexity—but that knowledge has not permeated the thinking of most of today's executives or the business schools that teach tomorrow's managers.

This particularly applies to managing child protection and The Munro Review has begun illustrating examples of emerging practice attempting to address the inherent complexity and to find new responses to the variety of demands on children's services.

The PCF reminds us about the changing economic, social, political and organisational contexts that social work operates within. How inter-agency, multi-disciplinary and inter-professional dimensions to practice and effective partnership working are dynamic and increasing play a part in service impact. And how roles within new types of teams and effective team working create positive impacts and improvement.

This also involves the SWAPP manager understanding and addressing the obstacles that inhibit people, teams, organisations from realising their developmental goals. The importance of shared value base in this has been illustrated by Goodman and Trowler (2012):

Critical to the success of reclaiming social work was establishing a shared value base from which to work. In the often stressful, high risk and highly active environment that is statutory child and family social work, it is all too easy to lose sight of our purpose and values. This is often

illustrated by a tendency to behave in a punitive, risk averse ways to some of the most vulnerable children and families in our society.

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Inspection

The most important measure of how well children's social care services are operating is whether children and young people are effectively helped and kept safe from harm. It is imperative, therefore, that the new inspection framework reflects how well this is happening in local areas. As part of this, the inspection system should be able to examine the journey of children through the child protection system from needing to receiving help.

Munro Review Final Report (2011)

Impact of the Munro Review

The policy position of the coalition government has been to reduce central prescription, reduce the burden of inspection and allow areas to localise services. The Munro Review became one of the key drivers to change the approach to inspection of child protection and linked services including early help which Munro included within the ambit of her review. Munro (2011) also viewed inspection and guidance as two of the key system conditions that needed to change in order that the system could re-calibrate around the needs of the child:

The review's analysis of current problems identified that some of the constraints experienced by practitioners and their managers were attributed to statutory guidance and the inspection culture. Many complain that practice has become focused on compliance with guidance and performance management criteria, rather than on using these as a framework to guide the provision of effective help to children.

Viewing the child protection system through a systems perspective led the Munro Review to comment that:

In the helping professions, an inspection system that places considerable weight on indirect measures of performance is seriously hampered in reaching reliable judgments about the quality of the service. This is because the measures exclude important factors that are not easily counted. In critiquing the current inspection system, the review is concerned with the culture that has developed around inspection that is only partly due to the formal inspection processes themselves.

It is important to remember that people's behaviour is influenced not just by how they are judged but how they believe they are judged. There is a perception that inspectors focus too much on adherence to processes, timescales and guidance and not enough on the things that really matter; outcomes for children and young people. This belief then influences priorities. Moreover, even if such easily measured factors are only part of the inspection, they are likely to be a major focus for senior managers because they can be more readily controlled.

In the above we can see that it is not just how inspection is undertaken but how the system that is subject to inspection responds to that process and the effect that response then has on the management of frontline practice. Hence the *need for a shift in the priorities around inspection in order that it can drive child-centred practice and improved outcomes for children.* This is one of eight direct proposals that Munro made; the second was that *inspection should examine children's experiences and their journey through the system* (these points are worth considering in their entirety and are at para 3.21 p46 of the Munro Final Report.)

Munro also recognised the limitations of inspection in driving improvement and envisaged the need for both sector led improvement and inspection:

It is important to be clear that inspection does not, and should not, stand by itself. The inspection system is a key component of an overall system of performance improvement – which also includes local authority self evaluation as its foundation, supported by sector-based peer review and challenge and improvement support – which should operate on an ongoing cycle, elements of which should be conducted annually.

So within the above we can see Munro promoting sector led improvement programmes such as SWAPP which she sees working alongside inspection as a key aspect of improvement.

Current Position on Inspections

Following the Munro review Ofsted announced a new safeguarding inspection framework that it would begin to undertake a new multi-inspectorate inspection process based around the Munro findings. The new Ofsted framework *Local Authority Arrangements to Protect Children* has been in place since the summer of 2012, findings from the inspections to date are considered below.

However it has recently been announced that the planned multi-inspectorate inspection framework that was an outcome of the Munro Review and due to start in June 2013 has been deferred. At the time of writing (June 2013) Ofsted is consulting on a new single inspection framework to start in the autumn of 2013:

The single framework replaces previous plans to implement separate inspections for child protection and services for children looked after. It proposes an

Adequate - 23 (56%)   Inadequate - 14 (34%)   Good - 4 (10%)
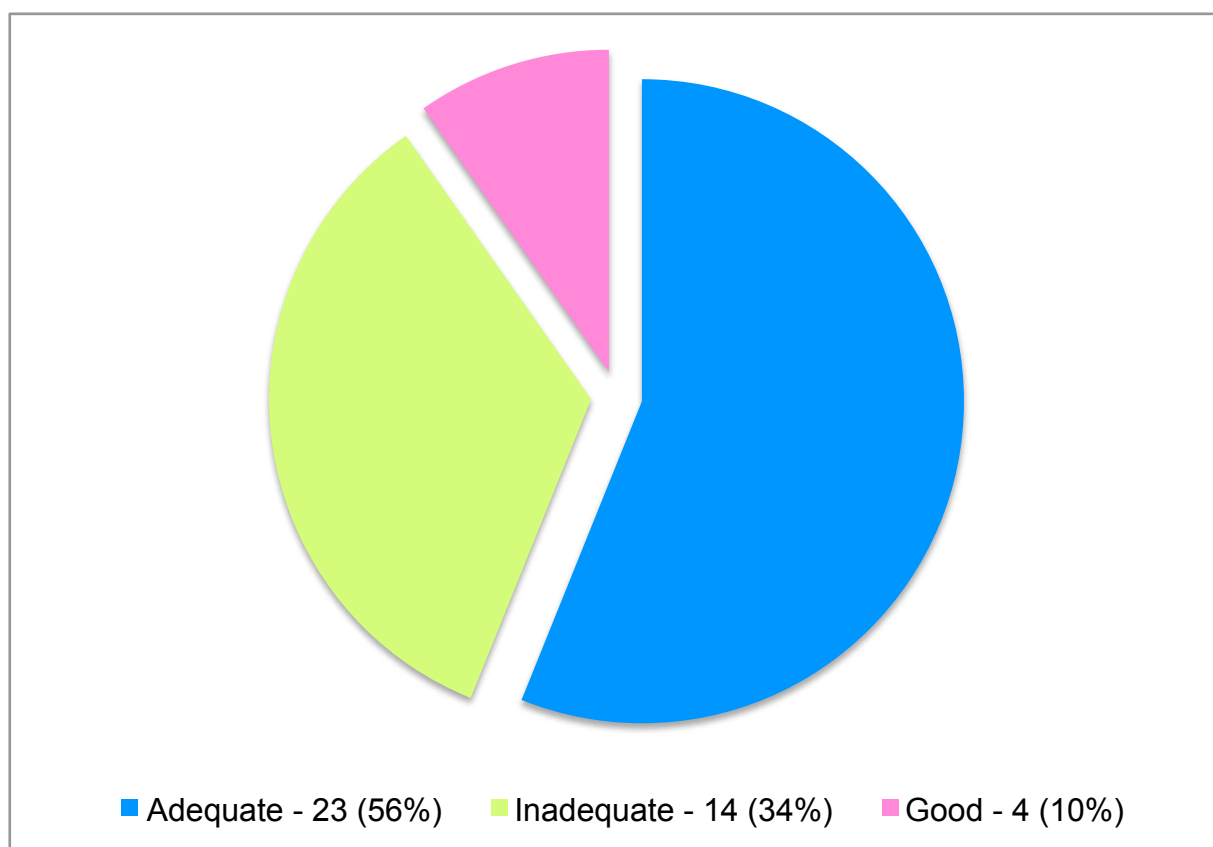
Figure 4: Recent Inspection Outcomes of Arrangements for the Protection of Children

evaluation of help, protection and care for children including the arrangements for local authority fostering and adoption services.

Subject to legislative changes Ofsted is also proposing to include the effectiveness of the LSCB within the remit of this inspection. For the single inspection framework the key judgement areas proposed are:

• The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection;
• The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanent homes and families for them;
• Leadership, management and governance.

Significantly Ofsted is proposing that:

The consultations describe 'good' as the minimum standard that children, young people, their families and carers have a right to expect. As such, the 'adequate' judgement is replaced by a judgement of 'requires improvement'.

A judgement of 'inadequate' in any of the key judgement areas will automatically result in an 'inadequate' judgement for overall effectiveness.

This would result in the following four grade descriptors *outstanding*, *good*, *requires improvement'* and *inadequate*. It would be hard to conclude other than that Ofsted intends a further significant raising of the expectations on local authorities. If the resulting Ofsted inspections follow the current trends for the inspection of protection of children (see the pie chart above), we may see very few authorities able to achieve good or outstanding.

Recent Inspections

The current framework for Ofsted inspections is the *Local Authority Arrangements to*

Protect Children. Some key aspects of this framework are:

These inspections will consider how effectively the local authority leads partnership working, and how effectively local services contribute to the protection of children and young people;

Early identification and early help are firmly within the scope of the inspection of child protection services;

The inspection will consider key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered.

(Ofsted 2012)

The full inspection framework is available on the Ofsted web site. The first reports from these inspections began to be published in August of last year. To date 41 reports have been published and the pie chart above shows the inspection judgement of Overall Effectiveness up until the end of May 2013. In viewing these results it is important to keep in mind that these current inspections are risk based and have been mainly focused on areas which Ofsted views as needing to improve. The Ofsted judgements are being made on a 4 point scale. These results are shown in the table above.

To date no authority has been judged as Outstanding, only 4 have been judged as Good, 23 have been judged to be Adequate and 14 judged as Inadequate. These results are disappointing for the sector and will have been the cause of significant concern to many of the individual authorities concerned.

We would speculate that some of the underlying factors that are contributing to these results are the changed criteria and in particular the inspection methodology which

is much more practice focused. Perhaps the key reason is the shift towards tracking the journey of the child through the system. In systems terms the inspection process which can be viewed as a regulator has been re-calibrated and the system has not responded quickly enough to these changes. Only time will tell if the recently announced revisions to the Ofsted inspection arrangements will compound this position.

High Expectations High Support and High Challenge

In this survey inspectors found that the most effective authorities take a systemic and holistic approach to supporting social workers, recognising that the components of effective support are interdependent and that the most effective support is provided when they are all aligned.

In early 2012 Ofsted published a research report into the management of 14 authorities all of which Ofsted considered to be high-performing. The title of the report *High Expectations High Support and High Challenge* accurately captures Ofsted's conclusion about their findings. This is an important report that is worth every manager in children's services taking the time to read in its entirety. However Ofsted summarised the features of such authorities in the following terms:

- *visible and accessible senior managers create and sustain supportive organisational cultures within which service development is influenced by front-line staff;*
- *effective recruitment and retention strategies result in a sufficient number of staff, stable teams and opportunities for career progression;*
- *social workers have manageable caseloads and the flow of work is monitored well;*
- *expectations and accountabilities of front-*

line staff are clear and their performance is monitored, audited and evaluated
- *social workers receive focused and regular supervision;*
- *good-quality, relevant learning and development opportunities are provided*
- *partnership working is embedded at all levels.*

Ofsted recognised that no single authority had all of these features but also recognised that there was no single feature that was important and that a systemic approach was required to achieve effective local systems. However, an important thread which runs through the report is effective organisational cultures.

Conclusion

Inspection is a key influence on priorities in frontline practice so needs to support the change from a compliance to a learning culture. The review has worked closely with Ofsted to look at how inspection can focus on and measure what really matters – whether children have been helped.
Munro Review of Child Protection Final Report

The intent of the Munro Review as quoted above was that inspection should shift in emphasis to examining whether services are delivering good outcomes for children. Given that there has been a doubling of the number of cases being inspected within the current round of inspections it can be argued that there has in fact been an increased rather than a decreased focus on casework compliance. At the heart of inspection processes including the current inspection is how well cases are being managed. Much of that is still determined by reading of cases by inspectors.

The response to this aspect of inspection by many services is to try to ensure that casework recording is of a high standard

and represents the practice of the service that Ofsted is scrutinising. This often results in what might be described as *polishing of the cases.* Significant energy is expended in case audit and case review processes and unless there is significant shift in the latest Ofsted methodology, this seems likely to continue to be the case.

However as the results from recent inspections seem to illustrate this approach in itself is probably insufficient to deliver good or excellent inspection outcomes. It also makes limited difference to service users. There is an ethical dilemma for all managers including front-line managers, should they be managing to deliver high quality outcomes for service users or managing to deliver satisfactory inspection outcomes. Given the significant impact of poor inspection outcomes for services and the careers of the seniors managers involved it would be naive to believe other than that achieving satisfactory inspection outcomes will always be a powerful driver of the shape of practice. What this consequently requires is that the inspection frameworks inspect what matters, good outcomes for children. It also requires managers to see good inspection outcomes as a by product of high quality service delivery rather than the purpose for service delivery.

In terms of the current frameworks the view expressed earlier was that services are struggling to be able to evidence that the child has a satisfactory journey through the local system. There is also an increased focus from Ofsted on observing practice and in seeking the views of staff on the quality of services. What we might conclude from this and the summary and analysis offered above, is that given the continued focus by Ofsted on casework, services will need to continue to pay significant attention to casework recording if they want to gain acceptable inspection results. However, we would argue that this needs to become

embedded in ongoing practice rather than being seen as the result of *polishing cases* as a part of inspection preparation. Casework recording needs to be of a high standard irrespective of inspection.

The journey of the child might characterised (perhaps unfairly in some contexts) as more of a stumble between agency services and within agency teams and resources than a seamless journey. If this is the case locally, then much greater attention needs to be paid both to inter-agency processes and the internal intra-agency processes for service delivery. Where tensions exist within services and between services and where service thresholds are unclear it will be difficult to evidence a meaningful journey for the child.

As Munro also recognises when she refers to the creation of learning organisations the views of staff on the effectiveness of services is critical in the delivery of high quality services. The shift in the behaviour of the inspectorates, means that services need to be much more focused on the reality of practice at the front door. Those that know this practice best are the front-line staff and managers. In our view it has now become mission-critical to ensure that those at the top of the organisation are aware and responsive to the knowledge and experience of frontline staff. This level of organisational connectivity and alignment is at the core of creating the intelligent learning organisation.

Front line managers and those who are supporting them through peer mentoring or SWAPP programmes, need to ensure that practice improvement evolves beyond *polishing cases.* If the above analysis is correct, what improvement processes need to ensure is that each and every child has a meaningful journey through the local system and that those at the top of the organisation are under no illusions regarding the reality of practice being experienced by service users at the front door.

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Leading and Managing in the New Local Context

Implications for Service Management

Over the last three years the landscape of public service management and the expectations on the management of social work practice have changed considerably. This section of the guide outlines the key changes and considers the implications for the management of practice.

In the section below Peter Hawkins concisely captures some the broader systems changes when he reflects that all *… organisations are having to face the unholy trinity of: greater demand for services, higher quality expectations and less resource* (Hawkins and Smith 2013). In relation to the professional context for practice, some of the changes we have seen include:

- The Munro Review of Child Protection;
- The Social Work Task Force;
- The Family Justice Review;
- Revised Working Together;
- Revised Inspection Frameworks;
- Creation of the College for Social Work;
- The development of the Professional Capabilities Framework;
- Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework; and,
- The move towards sector led improvement.

In a relatively short time scale the above represents significant change in both the context and the detail of the expectations on front-line social work managers. There are also a range of further changes in the pipeline including the legislation resulting from the Family Justice Review.

The above requires a significant re-evaluation of how services are run and managed and the expectations on and the role of front line managers. The context has changed and those at the sharp end of the system have to be both encouraged and allowed to manage differently.

What Does this New Context Require?

Further sections of the Reference Document address the characteristics of high performing teams and services. In this section we address some of the implications of these changes for frontline practice management. In summary we believe that what is required is:

- Moving from managing services for performance indicators and inspection outcomes to managing for best outcomes for service users;
- To ensure that the organisation is intelligently connected between the frontline, senior managers and strategic planning groups, i.e. the LSCB;
- To recognise the inter and intra dependencies within and across the agencies and to work strategically and practically to manage the totality of the local system ensuring that children who need help access it quickly;
- For frontline managers to be responsible for creating the context where their staff are able to exercise their professional discretion in order to meet the complex needs of service users.

If services are to respond to these challenges, this new context requires

changes in behaviours across the system not just in the behaviour of front line managers.

What also has to be remembered is the scale and complexity of the change task that is required. For over three decades the primary model of management promoted within public services including children's services has been based upon a managerialist or new public management approach (Chard 2010). Such an approach promotes the view that central government needs to prescribe practice and then monitor that practice through performance indicators.

We are clearly at a potential tipping point where this approach is being powerfully challenged by those who advocate creating learning organisations and more systemic approaches, including by the Munro Review. However, it would be foolish to believe that a managerialist approach has been completely abandoned either by central government or in the local management of services and the The Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework is but one example of this.

In addition the managerialist approach has become so embedded in the management culture and language of local government services it is at times difficult to recognise let alone challenge and change. Consequently the current reality is that whilst these opposing approaches are in play, both strategic managers and front-line managers need to be able to balance the performance management and other requirements of the managerialist approach whilst also managing for effective outcomes for service users. This is a complex task ethically and practically.

An example of this balancing act is that Working Together 2013 has retained the overall timescale for completion of assessments but anticipates that in some cases this may be exceeded:

The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. If, in discussion with a child and their family and other professionals, an assessment exceeds 45 working days the social worker should record the reasons for exceeding the time limit.

Working Together 2013

Local processes and monitoring frameworks will need to determine the acceptability or otherwise of exceeding the 45 working day time line and when this occurs how this will be managed, recorded and understood. This is an example of the sort of context where it will be important for there to be a clear message from the top of the organisation as to what is acceptable and what isn't, in order that front line managers can assist workers to exercise professional discretion and best meet children's needs. There will be no point in senior managers declaring that the organisation is managing for outcomes if the messages it gives to front line managers is inflexible and don't concur with this.

Ensuring that front line managers are clear regarding the expectations on them will be a key aspect of creating organisational alignment and creating the organisational culture that will be needed to manage within these new realities.

Frontline Managers

The changed context requires new responses from frontline managers in how they lead and manage. This will in turn enable their staff to respond to the required changes.

Purpose

The purpose of frontline managers within this new context can be described as *using*

all of the available resources, to create the optimum conditions for the delivery of safe and effective practice, leading to the best possible outcomes for service users (Chard 2013).

This can be viewed as an ethical position which sits comfortably with the Professional Capabilities Framework, it also fits with the position adopted by Ofsted in their report *High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge* (Ofsted 2012).

Accepting the position requires managers to become highly focused on their task. It will also at times be a demanding position. It requires managers to create the context for high quality practice and then to support and where required challenge staff to deliver it. To do this well, the manager needs effective practical and emotional support from their manager and the wider agency systems.

Managing Motivated Staff

Creating the context for staff to deliver of their best requires the manager to pay attention to a range of factors. A fundamental of the approach is recognising that the vast majority of staff entered the profession to make a difference for service users. Such staff, given effective leadership, are highly motivated and don't need performance indicators to deliver quality services. (Chard and Ayre 2010). However, the manager needs to be supported and effective in challenging staff who are not motivated in this way. Reduced resources and the need to deliver high quality services also make this an ethical imperative.

Moving from Auditor to Coach

Perhaps driven by the pressure of inspection, one focus for frontline managers has been auditing cases and then advising staff as to whether cases comply with the required audit model. The problem with this approach is that usually takes place after the event and so does nothing to improve the service to the child. As it takes place retrospectively it has limited value in helping the worker manage the complexity of the case.

Focussing on outcomes requires managers to move upstream in the process both supporting workers and scrutinising practice as it is delivered. This approach takes no more time and positions the manager as team coach rather than team auditor. Working in real time is likely to improve the outcome for the service user as the direction of the case can be influenced. It also means the manager is directly engaged with the practice of the worker and the team. This approach is supported by Ofsted who in the report, *High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge* comment that:

> *The support provided by first line managers was the most crucial and was mediated through the provision of a clear planning framework, their detailed knowledge of families, their critically reflective and emotionally supportive formal and informal supervision and their direct contact with families. The quality of line management support was particularly important at key points in the child's journey, notably the recognition that a child protection plan would be needed; at the point of making the plan; and in deciding to discontinue the plan.*

Contributing to Organisational Alignment

A cornerstone of the learning organisation is creating organisational alignment on organisational purpose (Senge 1990). Expressed more simply there needs to be clarity throughout the organisation on what it is the organisation wants to achieve. The responsibility of the frontline manager is focussing their particular team on what they need to do to help the organisation achieve these objectives.

Promoting Organisational Transparency

To be effective in delivering services and in managing risk the organisation needs to be transparently connected to its objectives and be clear as to whether it is delivering them. Another of the requirements for creating organisational learning is ensuring that the top of the organisation including local politicians have a clear and unambiguous understanding of the success and challenges being experienced at the service delivery end of the business. This will help to ensure that scarce resources are focussed on areas of need and is also likely to reduce the shocks from unannounced inspections and critical case reviews.

This places a responsibility on the frontline manager to listen to the issues and difficulties their staff are facing and ensure that these are communicated clearly to those above. The responsibility on those above is to be open and responsive to these messages.

An important quality that the frontline manager will need to display is the ability to speak truthfully to more powerful managers, this is sometimes paraphrased as *speaking truth to power*. Those with greater organisational power need to be explicit in their interest and encouragement of such behaviour even if the messages are difficult. Those with less organisational power often need to be helped in order that they can speak openly about organisational risks (Schein 2009). There is then a parallel requirement on the frontline manager and their staff to also behave in this way.

(The section of the Reference Document on Overcoming Defensive Responses is important in this regard).

Managing Within the Whole System

The focus of frontline managers is often on their own particular team and area of practice. However this new context requires a systemic approach and managers at all level to consider their place in the organisational whole. To consider how the service they manage interfaces with and is affected other teams and services both within their own agency and beyond into the local system. Managing systemically is also a fundamental requirement for organisational learning and intrinsic to organisational effectiveness because of the interdependencies that always exist.

For example if decisions are made to change how a referral and assessment service is working this will almost certainly impact on how referrals are received from the local hospital and the police. It may also then have an impact on the fostering or placements team and so on. Changing one part of the system will almost certainly affect other parts of the local system. This in turn will not only impact on those services but more importantly on the child's journey through the local system.

One of the behaviour changes this requires is for frontline managers to think through the impact of changes in how they are managing their team and its responsibilities might have on the broader system and in doing so, consult with others before making these sorts of changes.

(The section of the reference manual Thinking Systemically - Seeing Patterns and Connections can help with this).

Managing Reflexively - Double Loop Learning

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got, and you'll always feel what you always felt.
Unknown

One of the threads running through the

sections immediately above is the need for the frontline manager to recognise that they are managing within a complex adaptive system. A system that needs to be influenced and changed by the experience of frontline staff and service users.

Munro (2010) spoke of a *concern with doing things right versus a concern for doing the right thing.* Part of the systems thinking underlying this statement is that in order to change how services are delivered organisations need to create the conditions for double-loop learning. This is learning that causes the organisation not simply to refine what it is doing but to question the underlying assumptions about why it doing what it is doing and change what it does in response. As has hopefully been established above the frontline manager has a key role in this process.

Another way that this can be described is managing reflexively. The concept of reflexivity is closely allied to creating double loop learning. When we work reflexively we recognise that we are affected by the context in which we are working and how we manage is also affected by that context. We also affect the broader organisation in which we work. Where the organisation is receptive this in turn helps to create double loop organisational learning. There is strong parallel here with the idea of critically reflective practice. It is not sufficient to reflect on practice that reflection needs to change the practice.

Summary

The new context for leading and managing requires frontline managers to reflect on how they are currently managing and reflexively consider whether they need to change how they lead and manage in light of the changed responsibilities that they face.

Managers need to work systemically,

to display leadership and work with the creativity and motivation of the workforce in order to meet diverse needs.

Managing within this new context requires managers who are able to challenge the underlying organisational norms and assumptions in order to improve practice and the child's journey through the local system.

For those involved in SWAPP activities there is a need to assist colleagues with this changed management context and assist others to review their approach.

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Thinking Systemically Seeing Patterns and Connections

When we throw a stone into a pond we expect to see a circle of rings as the impact of the stone on the water causes disturbance which ripple across the surface. When we act within an organisational system, like the ripples in the pond it can impact far beyond our immediate action. I wonder why it is we anticipate the ripples on the pond, but often fail to recognise how our actions can like the ripples on a pond reverberate through a human system? (Chard 2013).

Organisations can be viewed as being like machines and made up of parts or departments and reflected within an organisational structure chart. The metaphor of organisation as machine has its roots in a managerialist or reductionist approach which has at the centre the view that the way to manage something is to break it down into a series of processes. These can then be routinised and measured which can in turn tell us how well the organisation is functioning.

A managerialist approach to management of public services became widespread under the Thatcher government and has been the dominant way of managing public services ever since. The Munro Review Part One (2010) challenged this as an effective way of managing child protection services which is aptly summed up by the quote:

… you can deliver a pizza but you cannot deliver a child protection service.

Another way of looking at organisations is as complex adaptive human systems where people in relationship through their inter-actions co-create the organisation. This position has its roots within very different traditions. Systemic thinking recognises that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Or as Mario Bungé (1979) maintains:

… the universe is not a heap of things but a thing composed of interconnected things – i.e. a system.

Systems and *systemic* are two terms that often get used interchangeably. Broadly speaking systems thinking has its origins in mechanical systems and systemic thinking originates from biological or ecological theories. Two key systemic thinkers were Gregory Bateson and Humberto Maturana.

Robert Flood (1999) sees the development of systems thinking as being a response to reductionism and the understanding of phenomena by breaking them down into constituent parts rather than phenomena being understood to be an emergent property of an interrelated whole. Flood argues that:

We can only meaningfully understand ourselves by understanding the whole of which we are an integral part. Systemic thinking is the discipline which makes visible that our actions are inter-related to other people's actions in patterns of behaviour and are not merely isolated events.

Systemic thinking recognises that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Moving from simplistic understandings of pieces of systems, looking much more broadly, recognising how we are affected by wider forces and looking for unforeseen consequences are some of the things that thinking systemically brings to working in complex systems and situations.

To give a brief example, taking a systemic viewpoint on child protection. We can see that how the frontline social worker inter-acts with a family will be influenced by how they are being managed, by how their

manager is being managed, by the office and organisational expectations and culture, the way that the senior managers in the organisation behave, the political leadership of the organisation, the expectations from the DfE, statements made by the Secretary of State and the media response and so on. To give another more poignant example think about the impact on services of the death of a child and the impact of a negative serious case review. Such events can impact on many services not just the one where the child died and sometimes for many years.

Interestingly Ofsted (2012) recognised in their research into high performing child protection services the relationship between how staff are managed and the services they then deliver. The above also reflects Munro's position that we need to view child protection from a systems perspective.

An important fusion is the joining together of systemic thinking with social construction. (An area which relies heavily on this fusion is systemic family therapy). Mary Gergen and Ken Gergen (2004) observe that:

> *The foundational idea of social construction seems simple enough, but it is also profound. Everything we consider to be real is socially constructed. Or more dramatically, Nothing is real unless we agree that it is.*

This is a potentially liberating position and as Dixon (1999) suggests this leads us to the position that, *all organization forms are a product of the human mind and can therefore also be altered by the human minds*. If we accept the view point that reality is a socially constructed process, then we can influence the way organisations work by changing the way (on a moment by moment basis) people in the organisation have their conversations. One important strand of systems thinking is referred to as *second order cybernetics*. Heinz von Foerster (1992) captures

an important essence of second order cybernetics when he states:

> *Am I apart from the universe? That is, whenever I look am I looking through a peephole upon an unfolding universe. Or: Am I part of the universe? That is, whenever I act, I am changing myself and the universe as well.*

This understanding lies at the root of the idea of acting reflexively.

What Use is This to a Peer Reviewer, Manager or Internal Consultant?

Adopting a systemic position requires us to look beyond the immediate and consider the context within which it is occurring. So if a child is committing offences we might be curious as to how the family system is creating or maintaining that behaviour. In a similar way in an organisation if a worker is struggling, under-performing or off sick with stress, we need to ask what is creating that behaviour. If a team is struggling or under-performing we need to think about what is the organisational context that has led to that position and what needs to change. If the organisation is struggling or under-performing we again need to view the wider context in which that position has occurred and is being maintained.

So whilst we will need to pay attention to improving processes and operational practices we also need to pay attention to the context within which they are occurring. If we merely tend to the processes and fail to address the broader systemic issues the likelihood is that the improvement process will ultimately fail. Achieving that viewpoint or insight is sometimes called adopting a meta-position or in the jargon a helicopter view. As an external person you are often well placed to adopt such a position. As a manager reflecting with someone from outside the organisation can assist you with this.

Recognising that the organisation is socially constructed has real significance for how we work in and with organisations. If we go into an organisation and look for problems we will be likely to find them and if we define them as problems we have confirmed that reality. If we go into an organisation and take a strengths based approach and identify what the organisation is doing well we begin to define a fresh reality from which to build improvement.

Taking a systemic social constructionist position to managing (or helping others to manage) requires continual awareness and reflection (or reflexivity). It requires continual curiosity about what is happening and why it is happening the way it is. It then requires what is often a subtle response in order to create the possibility for change. This can be seen as a form of practical action research.

The significance of the perspectives we gain from second order cybernetics is that as a manager peer reviewer or consultant, you are not an observer on a system, through your presence or even your anticipated presence you become part of a system. This provides the potential to influence that system and in turn being influenced by it. Understanding this also helps us to manage the emotional response to the system we are working in. For example if you are feeling anxious or angry, it is about asking yourself why and using this to help manage your responses. (This is again a reflexive position).

Summary

From a systemic position a bullet point summary might be viewed as reductionist. Nevertheless for the aid of the reader some key points are:

• We need to view organisations as human systems where people are in relationship;
• You need to consider why the manager, team or organisation is the way it is and what is holding it in that position;
• You should recognise that you are influencing the system and being influenced by it.

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Resources

Books:

Ann Cunliffe's, A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Management is good starting point for a book on relational and constructionist approaches to management.

Peter Senge's book the Fifth Discipline was one of the first management books on systemic thinking and remains an important text. Because for Senge the fifth discipline was systemic practice.

Robert Flood's, Rethinking the Fifth Discipline, Learning Within the Unknowable, includes overviews of a range of key systemic thinkers.

Fritjof Capra's book The Web of Life provides a synthesis of a wide range of systems thinking and of the need to move away from a mechanistic approach. Capra, F, (1996) The Web of Life; A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter, Flamingo Harper Collins.

Stafford Beer was one of the leading writers on the application of cybernetics to management. Think before you Think is a collection of his writings. Beer, S Whitaker, D editor, (2009), Think before you Think: Social Complexity and the Knowledge of Knowing.

Websites:

Taos Institute: http://www.taosinstitute.net The Taos Institute is a community of scholars and practitioners concerned with the social processes essential for the construction of reason, knowledge, and human value. The Taos Institute website provides links to a wide range of publications and resources related to social constructionist theory and practice.

Appreciative Inquiry Commons: The "AI Commons" is a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing discipline of positive change. A very useful resource which is the academic home of appreciative inquiry.

Infed: the encyclopaedia of informal education provides a range of introductory guides to what they call key thinkers. Of relevance to this text these include: Chris Argyris (Double-Loop Learning) http://www.infed.org/thinkers/argyris.htm, Donald Schön, http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-schon.htm and Peter Senge http://www.infed.org/thinkers/senge.htm. They also provide guides to key ideas. Of relevance to this text these include: Dialogue and Conversation http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-dialog.htm, The learning Organization http://www.infed.org/biblio/learning-organization.htm and reflection http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-reflect.htm.

Managing in Complexity Working with Emergence

This section follows on from Thinking Systemically Seeing Patterns and Connections. The two sections are closely connected in that systemic practice is about recognising and working with complexity.

The Complexity of Context and of Practice

Social work with children and families is located with an area of public service that has a high degree of political, public and media accountability and deals with contentious and often intractable personal and social problems. Russel Ackoff (1979) contends that; *Workers and managers are not confronted with problems that are independent of each other, but with dynamic situations that consist of complex systems of changing problems that interact with each other.* Ackoff aptly called such situations *messes.* Two of the main aspects of this are the organisational complexity and the complexity and often the chaos of the lives of those for whom services are provided.

In terms of the organisational complexity, typically from the viewpoint of the worker and the service user there are five or six organisational layers from team managers through to chief executives. In addition there are a variety of local management boards and the local political layer of elected members. This is then further over-layered with organisational accountability to national government through inspection and performance requirements and the scrutiny of local MPs and the media. Intrinsically services are being delivered within a highly complex local and national political environment.

Services are also often dealing with long-standing and seemingly intractable social issues, which society has been trying to ameliorate over a very long period. The users of services are some of the most vulnerable and disempowered within society. The lives of these service users will often be extremely complicated and rarely will there be a simple answer to the problems they present or create. At the individual level the issues being faced can be sensitive and emotive; a child has been sexually abused, a child is charged with rape, a parent has committed murder, a child has committed suicide. Delivering services to the vulnerable, the abused and to abusers is often emotionally charged and challenging. Events around the tragic killing of children or of children who kill others, clearly demonstrate that practice can be subject to intense media scrutiny.

Some Theoretical Perspectives

If the world were formed by stable dynamical systems, it would be radically different from the one we observe around us. It would be a static, predictable world, but we would not be here to make the predictions. In our world, we discover fluctuations,bifurcations,and instabilities at all levels. Stable systems leading to certitude correspond only to idealizations, or approximations (Prigogine, 1996).

Having recognised this significant complexity, it is paradoxical that the managerialist approach of the last three decades has been about attempting to reduce complexity rather than embrace it and manage within it. Munro (2011) in her final report recognised this when she comments that:

… a system needs 'requisite variety' to respond to the varied needs of children and young people. Evidence submitted to the review has made clear that many professionals describe themselves as working in an over-standardised framework that makes it difficult for them to tailor their responses to the specific circumstances of individual children. Yet children's needs and circumstances are very varied and this

is not an area of work that can be reduced to a set response.

In other words you need to respond to complexity with complexity. A key feature of complexity is recognising that much of what we have to deal with is hard to predict and that this requires an ability to live with complexity, uncertainty and emergence. Recognising that the future is emergent has consequences such as recognising that planning is not a linear process, rather more a process of continual adjustment towards developing goals. This is true both in organisational terms and in work with children and their families.

The challenges children's services face are profoundly complex, including those beyond the ability or reach of any single agency to resolve. Such challenges are often referred to as *messes* (Ackoff 1979) or as *wicked problems* or *wicked issues* (Richards, 2001). Addleson (2003) proposes that successful resolution of such issues involves a collaborative, participative, creative social process of sharing knowledge in order to make meaning, people engaging each other
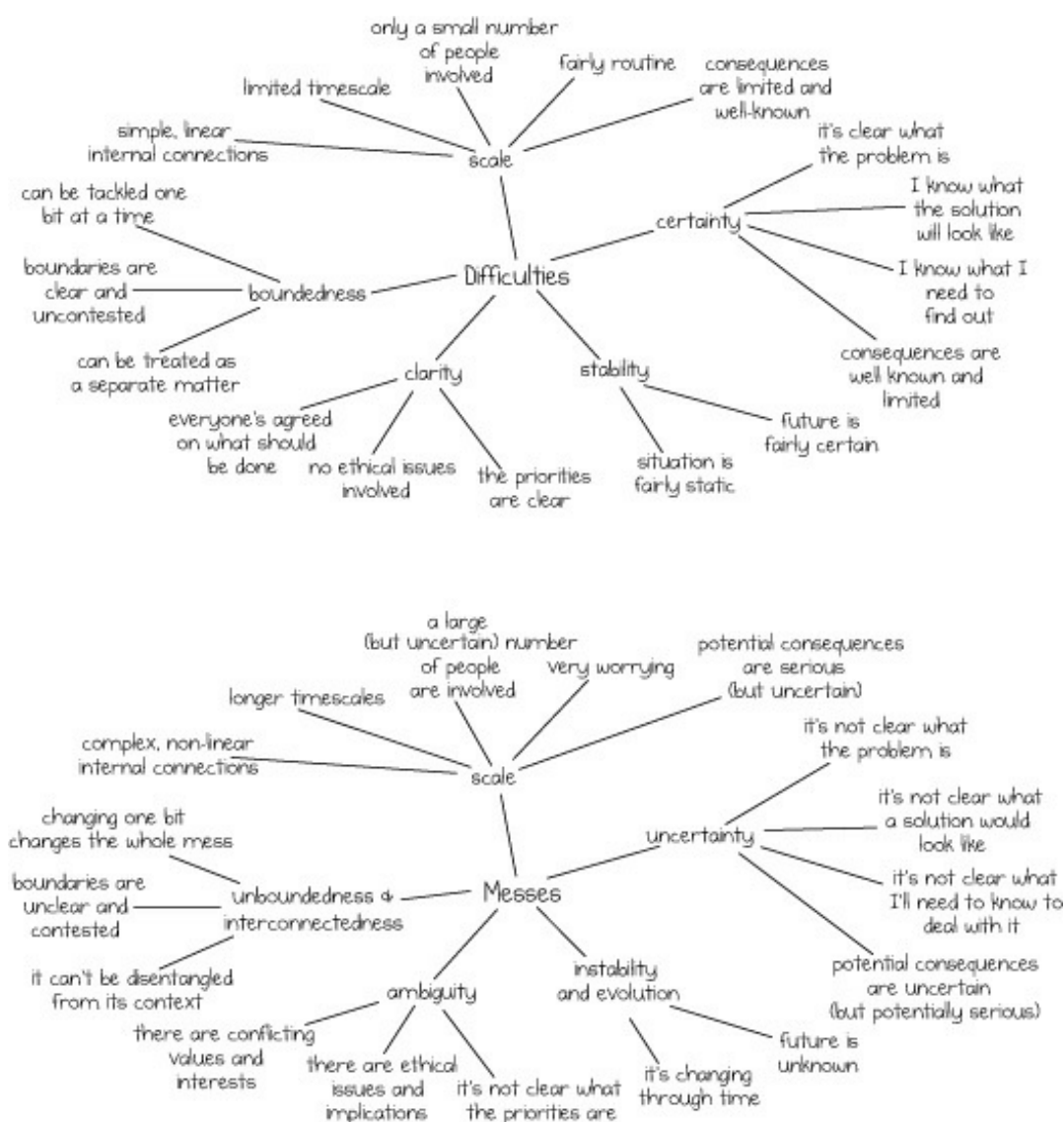
Figure 5 Messes or Difficulties?

This figure was originally published in Growing Wings on the Way: Thinking Systems for Messy Situations, Rosalind Armson, Axminster: Triarchy Press (2011). Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

in conversations, saying what they think and know, telling their stories.

Rosalind Armson (2011) suggests that we need to distinguish between messes and difficulties (see diagram above). Difficulties are resolvable through progressive steps, messes require a different systemic approach which recognises their complexity. Whilst there is a continuum between these extremes, both frontline casework and organisational improvement within children's services can be viewed more as a challenge of working with messes than with more easily resolvable difficulties.

The perspective of the organisation as a complex adaptive system has underpinned many sections of this guide. Ralph Stacey an organisational theorist and practitioner (1997) drawing on the work of Prigogine and other complexity theorists suggests that:

> … *a group of people and the groups of people that constitute organizations are all complex adaptive systems. They consist of agents, in the form of autonomous individual human beings, who interact with each other, so forming a network system that produces patterns of individual, group and organizational behaviour. Just as with all other complex adaptive systems they evolve, or learn, their way into an open-ended future that they co-create in a self organizing way.*

An key aspect of Stacey's use of complexity theory is of the organisations ability to self organise through what Stacey terms bounded instability. Stacey (1997) comments that:

> *The real discovery, though, is that at some critical point in energy/information flow and connectedness between the agents the system displays the dynamics of a phase transition between stability and instability - just before it becomes explosively unstable*

> *it displays a different kind of dynamic in which it is paradoxically both stable and unstable at the same time, in which it is both amplifying and stabilising changes. … In the phase transition of bounded instability a system never exactly repeats its behaviour: it is capable of escalating tiny changes into qualitatively different forms of behaviour.*

This outlines a key aspect of complexity theory, that of emergence. The ability of the system to adapt and for new structures to emerge. The ability to work within complexity and recognise the future as emergent is a foundation for practicing in complex systems. Another important insight that Stacey offers (1997 and 2001) is that organisations can be conceptualised as being based around both the legitimate system and what Stacey calls the shadow system of personal networks and relationships. Stacey sees these as key to organisational change and learning (or indeed resistance to change). In this context achieving change is as much about affecting the shadow system as it is the more formal organisational systems.

Where does decision making take place in your organisation? In the legitimate systems or the shadow systems?

Some Ways of Working With Complexity

Organisational Jazz

A useful metaphor for organisations which works with the idea of complexity is the concept of organisational jazz. Frank Barratt (1998), who is both an accomplished musician, manager and academic, uses this metaphor. Jazz is organic and emergent. It relies on skilled players jointly creating and unfolding a musical future, where on a moment by moment basis leadership can be passed among the players.

Thinking about Thinking

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift (Einstein - quoted in Klein 2004).

Complexity by its very nature is not always amenable to linear or logical thinking. Munro (2008), argues for applying intuitive as well as analytic thinking within social work practice:

Some want the profession to aim at being based on formal, explicit knowledge, with a burgeoning empirical evidence base gradually eradicating intuition and empathy. Others argue for the essential role of intuition and empathy in understanding and helping people, taking the view that formal knowledge can never replace these skills. Recent research in neurophysiology puts this debate in a new light. Studies show that we have two separate methods of processing data in our brains, one analytic and the other intuitive. Both are necessary for the highest level of reasoning. Neither intuitive or analytic reasoning are 'the best' but each has different strengths and weaknesses, and in reality, we use both in most reasoning tasks.

Munro argues that the agency plays a role in improving reasoning skills. Recognising the importance of intuition is equally applicable to the management of social work. In particular when dealing with complexity. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) contend that:

Each of us has, and uses everyday, a power of intuitive intelligence that enables us to understand, to speak and to cope skilfully with our everyday environment. We must learn what this power is, how it works, where it fits into our lives, and how it can be preserved and developed.

One reason why intuitive thinking can be seen as important in dealing with complexity (and when thinking systemically) is that it draws on the innate ability of the human mind to recognise patterns and ambiguities or inconsistencies in situations. An important tacit skill applied within an organisational context is taking fragments of information and making sense of them and seeing the connecting patterns in organisational behaviour. Our ability to discern patterns from fragments of information and use these as a way to go on is described by John Shotter as *practical hermeneutics*. Shotter (2009) describes:

... the importance of the spontaneous responsiveness of our living bodies to events occurring in the world around us, and the way in which our first learning in relation to the world around us develops out of these unplanned, pre-conceptual, unthought about, but nonetheless consequential actions in the world.

Within psychology one area of study has been termed by Wilson (2004), the adaptive unconscious:

Humans possess a powerful set of psychological processes that are critical for survival and operate behind the conscious mental scene. These processes, called the "adaptive unconscious," are intimately involved in how we size up our world, perceive danger, initiate action, and set our goals. It is the unconscious that allows us to learn our native language with no conscious effort, recognize patterns in our environments while we think about something else, and develop reliable intuitions to guide our actions.

Like other forms of thinking intuition can be wrong. Therefore it is important to use both intuitive and analytic thinking. Rather than suppressing it, an important question to ask when that thought springs to mind is why am

I thinking this? This is particularly important when dealing with risk.

We drew earlier on the work of Armson (2011) who distinguishes between messes and difficulties. She suggest that when we are dealing with messes we need to develop the *habits of systems thinkers,* developing a deeper understanding of complex situations. The diagram below illustrates these habits.
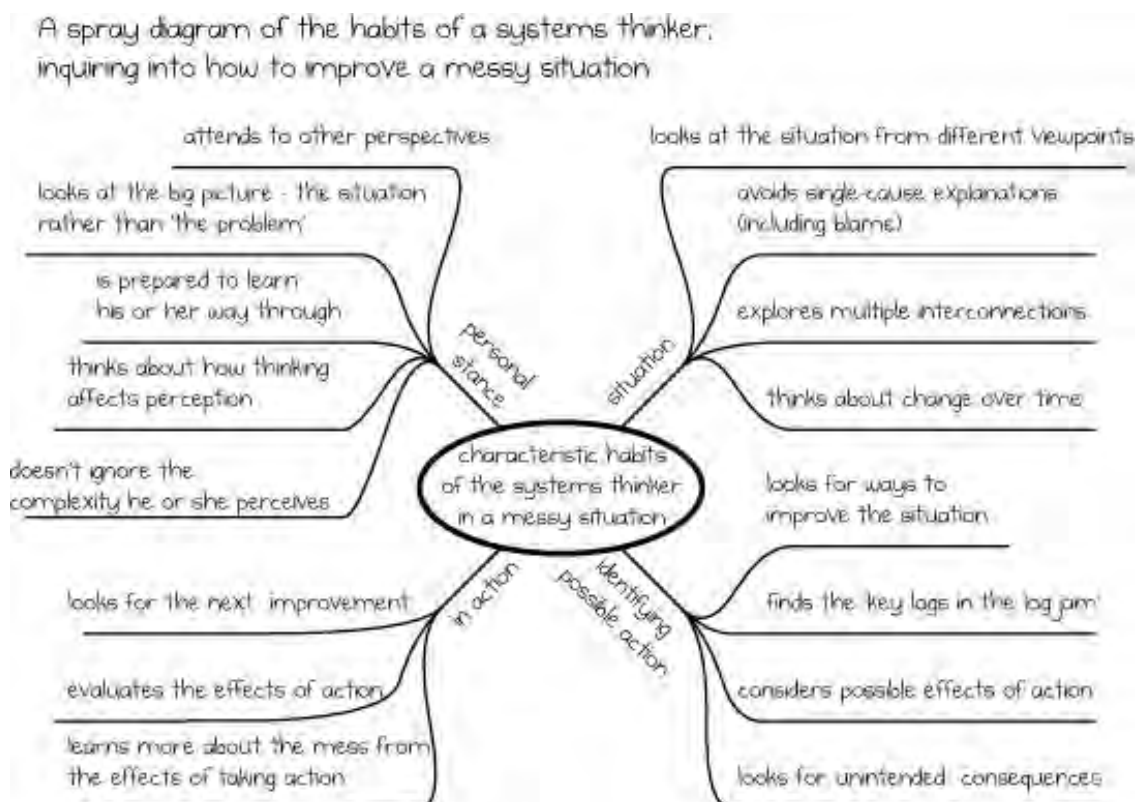
Using Dialogue to Explore Complexity

A good starting point for working with complexity is to consider how we hold our conversations. Deetz (1995) a professor of communication contends that:

Dialogic communication suggests that meaning is always incomplete and partial,

and the reason I talk with others is to better understand what I and they mean, hoping to find new and more satisfying ways of being together.

This suggests that dialogue is not simply about the communication of information but the co-creation of meaning which can be seen as joint learning. Paulo Friere (Shor and Friere 1987) also recognised the importance of dialogue, Friere commenting that:

It is part of our historical process in becoming human beings. ... Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it. ... Through Dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don't know, we can then act critically to transform reality.

A spray diagram of the habits of a systems thinker; inquiring into how to improve a messy situation

- attends to other perspectives
- looks at the situation from different viewpoints
- looks at the big picture - the situation rather than 'the problem'
- avoids single-cause explanations (including blame)
- is prepared to learn his or her way through
- explores multiple interconnections
- thinks about how thinking affects perception
- thinks about change over time
- doesn't ignore the complexity he or she perceives
- *characteristic habits of the systems thinker in a messy situation*
- looks for ways to improve the situation
- looks for the next improvement
- finds the key logs in the log jam
- evaluates the effects of action
- considers possible effects of action
- learns more about the mess from the effects of taking action
- looks for unintended consequences

personal stance / situation / identifying possible action / in action

Figure 6 Habits of Systems Thinkers

This figure was originally published in Growing Wings on the Way: Thinking Systems for Messy Situations, Rosalind Armson, Axminster: Triarchy Press (2011). Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

This provides a recognition of the power of dialogue in creating change and how reality is socially constructed. David Bohm (1996) recognised the need to create dialogue. Bohm distinguished dialogue which has linguistic roots in the Greek word dialogos or searching for meaning with discussion which shares it's linguistic roots with both percussion and concussion.

In a dialogue, however, nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue there is no attempt to win points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains. It's a situation called win-win, whereas the other game is win lose - if I win you lose.

Think about the management meetings you attend or the team or practice meetings you may chair. How would you describe them? Are they about searching for meaning and understanding or are they often dominated by an approach that is characterised by people exerting their viewpoint?

The world of social work involves high levels of complexity and our decision making can enhance or indeed ruin peoples lives. Particularly when you are taking or overseeing complex decisions (or helping someone else who has to take those decisions) it can be important to deliberately enter into dialogue. To search for meaning and joint understanding rather than discussion (or percussion) which is so often about winning and losing and where the critical objectives of the work can be lost. There is also clear link between how we have conversations and the need to address organisational defensive responses which is referenced elsewhere in the guide.

If you are working within another organisation observing how they conduct

their meetings and giving feedback can be an important aspect of provoking change. When working in another organisation how you carry on your conversations and give feedback is also an intrinsic aspect of understanding and working within their complexity. For example reflecting with them on what you have observed and asking revealing questions can be a powerful way to get individuals or groups to explore the complexity of their professional world. This should be undertaken in a manner that avoids defensive responses.

Learning Organisations

A response to organisational complexity and a move away from linear views of organisations can be seen within management literature through the conceptualisation of organisational learning as a way to work with complexity. Adopting a complex adaptive systems position, Munro argues that one of the causes of current difficulties in child protection has been the failure to recognise the complexity of the system and the systemic failure of organisations to learn (Munro 2010).

The concept of the learning organisation and the systemic nature of creating organisational learning was first brought to wide attention through Peter Senge's (1990) book The Fifth Discipline. For Senge the Fifth Discipline was systemic thinking. Senge focuses on the systemic nature of organisations and the need to *set aside the illusion that the world is created of separate unrelated forces. Giving up that illusion allows us to create organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, ... where people are continually learning how to learn together.*

Robert Flood (1999) extends the conceptualisation and the importance of systemic thinking to the creation of

organisational learning by drawing further on the work of a range of systemic thinkers such as Checkland and von Bertalanfy as well as Beer's work on organisational cybernetics. The sub-title of Robert Flood's book, Rethinking the Fifth Discipline: Learning Within the Unknowable (1999) resonates with the importance of working with emergence, we are always acting within the unknowable.

Action Research

Flood (2006) further proposes that one way to work within complexity is through the use of action research. Action research is practice based research that is useful approach to learning about an organisation. Lewin (1946)19 who is credited by many with coining the term action research stated that:

> The research needed for social practice can best be characterised as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.

Action research has now become established as a form of professional development, particularly in the field of education. Within that context Jean McNiff (2002) provides the following definition of action research:

> Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice.

McNiff also argues that the meaning a particular form of research has for the researcher emerges whilst doing the research and that knowledge can most effectively be generated through dialogue. In understanding the complexity of an organisation the role of the peer mentor or reviewer can be viewed as an action researcher as can the role of a manager in evaluating their own effectiveness.

Summary

- The practice and the context of social work entails significant complexity;
- Services are often dealing with long-standing and seemingly intractable wicked issues;
- Users of services are some of the most vulnerable and disempowered within society;
- You need to meet complexity with complexity;
- We need to use a dialogical approach to respond to complexity;
- Recognise the difference between a resolvable difficulties and the uncertainty of messes.

Resources

Rosalind Armson - Growing Wings on the Way resources on the Triarchy Press website http://www.triarchypress.net/growing-wings.html

Also, see the list above in Thinking Systemically Seeing Patterns and Connections

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Roles and Responsibilities of the Leadership Team

This section outlines the responsibilities and characteristics of high performing teams and in particular high performing leadership teams.

In every organisation the leadership team have four key responsibilities:

1. To set the direction for the organisation – being clear about the purpose (why the organisation exists), the strategy (what the organisation focuses their efforts on), the core values (how it engages) and the vision for success.
2. To lead and model the culture for the organisation – the culture is set by the collective leadership of the organisation , not only what they espouse but what they enact, both individually and collectively. If not actively attended to, "the culture will eat your strategy for breakfast" (Peter Drucker – famous writer on leadership).
3. To integrate the work of the organisation. Most organisational challenges lie not in the parts, but in the connections between the various aspects of the organisation. The role of the leadership team is to ensure that the organisation performs at more than the sum of the parts.
4. To manage stakeholder connections and conflict. Every organisation in the helping professions has multiple stakeholders, with often conflicting demands.

These at a minimum include:

a. The service users, and their demands for higher quality individualised help.
b. The families and carers of the service users who may have different demands than the service user.
c. The funders of the services, including the tax payer, who often want to pay less and see demonstrable return on investment.
d. The regulators, who want to ensure effective quality provision, quality assurance, good governance etc.
e. The employees, who need to feel they are listened to, supported and developed and treated fairly.
f. The local community and the other agencies which the organisation need to work in partnership with.

All organisations are having to face the unholy trinity of: greater demand for services, higher quality expectations and less resource. The leadership team need to ensure that this triangle is being addressed in an integrated approach, rather than delegated to different functions (Hawkins and Smith 2013).

To manage these different roles and responsibilities the leadership team collectively need to perform at more than the sum of their parts with a team culture of shared leadership. Increasingly Chief Executives as well as other leaders of senior executive teams are realising the importance of creating a high performing team with much greater shared leadership across the group.

This entails moving from a team leadership style where each team member reports in on their function through the team leader, with the team leader responsible for the integration of the parts ('hub and spoke' style), to one in which all team members take joint responsibility and engage in mutual accountability for the collective integrated work of the team ('shared leadership style').

Hawkins (2011) argues that high performing teams regularly attend to five key disciplines. He discovered that for a team to be successful it needs clear commissioning. This includes a clear purpose and defined success criteria by which the performance of the team will be assessed. Then the team must clarify its own mission including purpose, goals and objectives, core values, ways of working, roles and expectations and

importantly a compelling vision for success.

Living this is a different challenge. The team needs to constantly co-create together and attend to their processes of working together so the mission has a beneficial influence on performance. The team must then connect outside to engage staff and stakeholders and transform relationships that drive improvements in the organisation's performance.

At the centre of the model is core learning that sits in the middle and above the other four. This is the place where the team stands back, reflects on their own performance to consolidate the learning for the next cycle of engagement.

The high-performing team needs to be effective in all five of these disciplines. Although there is clearly an implied progression for moving through these disciplines, they are a continuous cycle and there is a constant dialogue between them. So, as is often the case, if the commissioning is not clear the team needs to have a dialogue between creating their own mission and establishing agreement from stakeholders.

A high-performing team takes time out to take stock, reflect on the patterns within and between disciplines and learn more about both their own team functioning internally and externally.

Great teams are those who know exactly what is required and have a passion for their collective purpose. They have a keen interest in each other's successes, setbacks and learning and a real sense of partnership between the team and with those it reports to and its key stakeholders.

This does not occur by happenstance. It occurs when the five disciplines are in place, connected and in balance. Many social work teams also require support from a
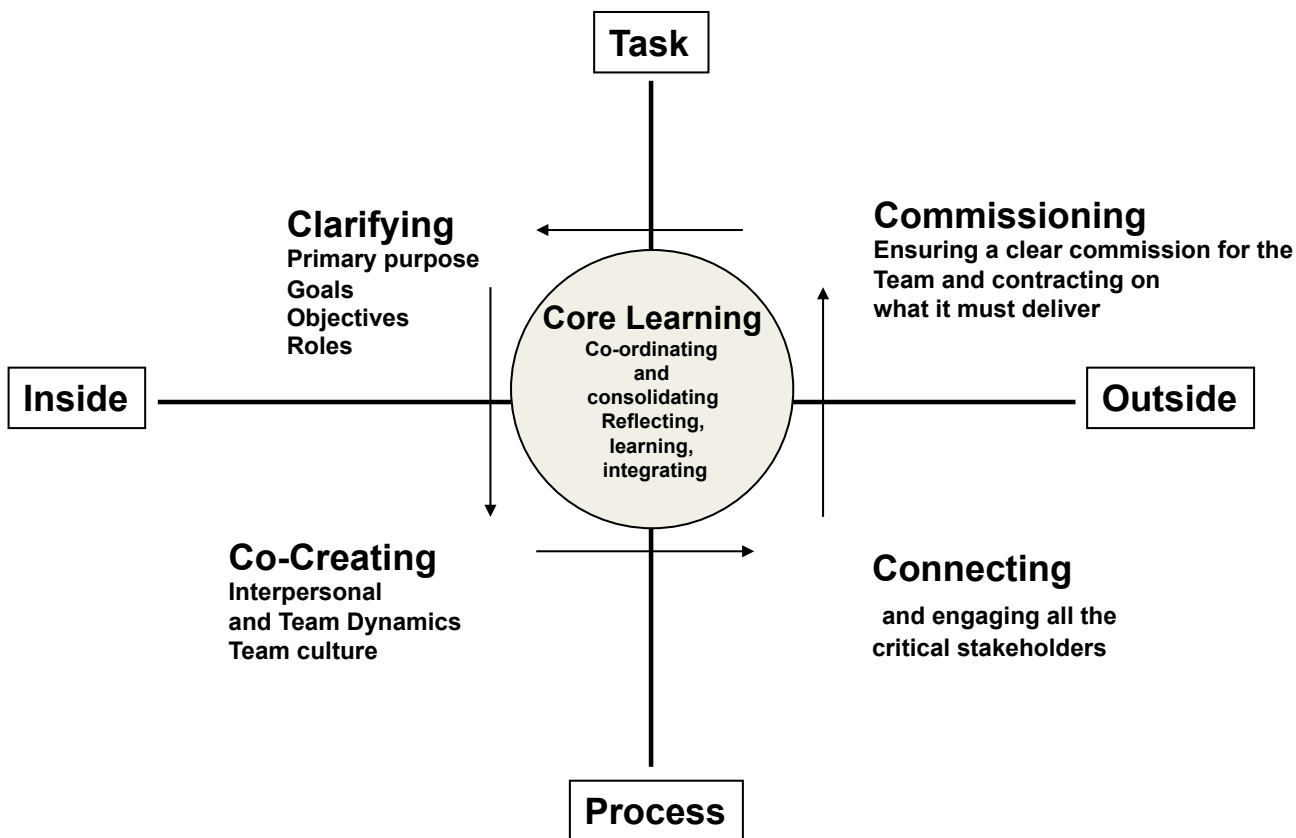
Figure 7: The Five Disciplines of High Performing Teams

facilitator or team coach or consultant to help them step back and reflect upon their work (Hawkins 2011).

Summary

The above provides a model for how teams can respond to the current challenges in public services and develop high performance.

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Managing High Quality Social Work Practice

In the previous section, Hawkins provided us with some theory about teams relevant to social work in order to make explicit the links between team working and service user outcomes. This section develops some of these ideas in relation to the key dimensions of effective team working. Specifically, how these inform active planning to create, manage, maintain and achieve a 'step up' improvement to effective team working within social work and children's services.

Much theorisation behind the characteristics of high performing teams, particularly around team behaviour and roles is based on research with men and business and informs the approach to human relationships in work groups which are of interest to us. Opie (2000) however argues that it is not sufficient to assess the functionality or dysfunctionality of teams solely on the basis of individual psychologies of team members but encourages consideration of the impact of externally imposed power by taking a more radical view – as well as considering individual disposition (an interactionist view) and the internal power structure of the group. This is relevant to the challenges facing social work reform. It remains important to consider what is unique about social work teams. The reality of team working occurs within a very complex landscape not easily mapped to classic theories. The emotional nature of social work and its resource limitations continues to be the subject of much debate and critique (Cooper, 2005).

Within the five disciplines presented by Hawkins, context (or the 'outside') is important because one of the ways in which an organisation influences the practice of social work is through how it structures the working group, the demands that it places upon it, as well as the impact of inter-professional and increasingly, integrated working. These factors demand attention to what is happening between teams as well as within teams, as both will equally determine success.

Constant instability and reactive changes requires attention by senior managers to managing change and making targets realistic for frontline staff so that these are experienced positively.

What are the current demands placed upon your team?

What are the key changes influencing the direction you are going? Are these externally or internally driven and what influences can you and your team bring to bear on the outcomes of these?

This section builds on the innovative body of work developed by systems theorists which centres on the nature of how individuals, groups and institutional processes within organisations are inextricably linked. It pays attention to the ways in which unconscious collective processes can affect and at times determine how effective we are in achieving its goals.

Leaders of successful teams have achieved a deeper understanding, insight and appreciation into the human side of working with problems endemic in organisations alongside good management skills. Integrating psychoanalytic perspectives within systems theory and group relations can be used to address challenges arising from rapid change, the dynamics of the workplace, a culture of accountability and drive towards partnership working. Managers of Children's services need to draw on a wider and varied knowledge and skills set which also incorporates conscious leadership development and practice.

Systems theorists talk about organisations needing to have synergy, and in terms of

their interdependence, and the connections between different systems within an organisation and/or between the team/ organisation and its environment. This enables us to work with a more organic model integral to which each social work team can be seen as a complete system in itself, comprising sub-systems which interact with each other and with the external environment, all tending towards an internal equilibrium.

By conceiving of our teams as an organism, we can imagine it to be more organic and permeable. How do you imagine yours? This might be another useful exercise to do in your team.

In complex organisations such as Children's services, the allocation of resources and prioritising of different activities is determined by the primary task, which must be clarified and performed if the team is to survive (Zagier-Roberts, 1994). Accurate analysis of the primary task can highlight discrepancies between what an organisation or team says it sets out to do and what is actually happening and helps to redefine its priorities.

Set some time in your team to clarify what your 'primary task' is and identify any conflicting priorities and how you might respond to them?

What are the characteristics of the systems within your own practice areas?

What are the main alliances and partnerships, both formal and informal that work for the team – how might these be increased or strengthened?

Communication and Team Dynamics

An important area within multi-agency and interdisciplinary and integrated working is communication, and the failure of communication is often cited within serious

case review as a response to mistakes, challenges and serious incidents. This is an area where continuing management attention is required in particular where there are changes in staff.

According to Capra (2003) systems of communications are constantly reinforcing themselves through multiple feedback loops. These produce a shared system of beliefs, explanations and values – a common context of meaning – that is continuously sustained by further communications. Through this shared context of meaning, individuals acquire identities as members of a social network, and in this way the network creates its own boundary. This is not a physical boundary, but a boundary of expectations, of confidentiality and loyalty, which is continually maintained and renegotiated by the network itself. What Capra is referring to here, is the hidden side of organisational or team life, particularly its culture and climate, which have a powerful influence on the development and delivery of services.

Being alert to the emotional undercurrent of team or organisational life can be a powerful source of information for frontline managers and leaders in understanding, reviewing performance, foreseeing challenges and opportunities and guiding decision and action (Armstrong, 2004). The capacity to work in a way that attends to resistance and negative processes to develop resilience is sometimes referred to as 'working below the surface' (Cooper, 2005).

Organisations can be viewed as being open or closed to the external environment. The degree to which the boundaries of an organisation are made more permeable or open has allowed both the creation of partnerships across boundaries. However this has also been accompanied by greater intrusion of external authority structures such as inspection, regulation and performance management as well as a decline in trust

and the creation of a more competitive environment. The loss of focus on the primary task, can lead us to avoid the sources of disturbance which might actually be a rich source of information. Embracing communicative techniques which include curiosity about practice, the concept of hypothesising or even showing neutrality have been shown in some teams to help to generate more innovative practice.

Techniques used such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperider et al, 2003) can help leaders of teams to seek connections among observations, explicit data, personal experience and prior knowledge when looking to review practice. From a systemic model of leadership practice, hypothesising can be adopted as both an approach (a way of thinking) and a technique (a way of doing) and invites us to take multiple positions to problems or issues and is not intended to capture reality but to give us ideas and flexibility in our thinking. Hypothesising is an important skill in a peer review programme which moves people from managing roles to helping ones.

Inter-professional and Cross Agency Working – Extrinsic Factors

National policy encourages delivery of integrated care and support through multi-professional teams and there is some evidence that these improve inter-professional understanding and relationships as well as generating greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness and access to services (Jones et al, 2013). There are also examples of damage to teams caused by budget cuts and organisational turmoil. In a study by Jones et al (2013) of how professionals in multi-professional health and social care teams define the core competencies and characteristics of different professions and how the time of these professions is deployed within teams, it was shown that:

- Some professions such as psychiatrists and clinical psychologists are seen to have more autonomy, more specialised knowledge and a focus on service users as they spend proportionately more face-to-face time using therapeutic interventions.
- Social workers in comparison are seen to arrange services, are focused on risk assessment and largely office-based.
- Nurses spend most work time on direct work with patients, having more autonomy than social workers and having an in-depth knowledge, spending nearly one third of their time in patients' homes.
- Non-professionally qualified and registered practitioners are more likely to spend time with service users and patients.

The study identified issues of professional understandings and perceptions and about patterns of time and task deployment. As working together increases, how teams work in practice and how different professions contribute and are deployed within teams are important issues to be addressed.

In relation to the SWAPP approach and peer review, Gouldner named two different types of 'identities' within organisations of interest when thinking about the external and internal relative influences on its culture and capacity for change:

1. Cosmopolitans – who find their work identity through membership of professional organisations and qualifications – in terms of career progression they tend to move horizontally between organisations in order to build their knowledge, experience and qualifications.

2. Locals – who find their work identify through their relationship with the organisation – in terms of career progression they tend to progress vertically through the hierarchy of one organisation.

Traditionally health and social care workers have been trained in uni-disciplinary environments which encourage recruitment and development of a cosmopolitan approach. Increasingly the move towards multi-disciplinary team working requires a more local approach. Gouldner suggests that it is helpful if all staff are able to identify one home team – that is the team whose objectives inform the way in which the individual works in all other teams in the organisation. This home team becomes the centre of a team community – all the teams that are required to achieve a valuable outcome for the service user/carer.

Again, it would be a useful exercise to identify these ideas within your own teams and services.

Specific Actions for Leading Successful Teams

Implementing change and improvement is both a multi-faceted and dynamic process that takes time to come about, and specific change programmes are generally unique to individual organisations. Organisations embark on change and improvement programmes for different reasons and how close they are to the desired end state also varies. We need to understand the nature of leadership which during the change process may lead to a call for charismatic and inspirational leaders, who are frequently brought in from the outside. Research by Higgs and Rowland (2010) however found that such 'movers and shakers' setting the pace for change and who persuade and cajole – are actually associated with failure. Similarly, Binney et al (2005) found that leaders who 'knew the answers' and did 'to others' and achieved 'compliance' paid lip service to new ways of thinking and behaving without achieving change in the hearts and minds of those concerned.

On the other hand, those who succeeded made themselves part of the process, engaging and listening to others, and developing their ideas as others developed theirs. They displayed skills of engagement and empathy and were willing to tolerate the uncertainty of working with others perspectives. Higgs and Rowland found that successful leaders are skilful at:

• 'Framing change' – working with others to develop vision and give others space to make change happen;
• 'Creating capacity' - helping others develop change management skills, giving feedback and coaching;
• Ensuring that people work across boundaries to effect the change.

This set of findings sits comfortably with the idea of distributed leadership, an approach which recognises that leadership roles can be taken by many more than just those official leaders.

Highly successful teams deliberately and consciously move away from what has not worked before and are outcome focused and solution oriented. Planned changes should be designed to support the development of front line managers and frontline social workers using an approach which enables individuals to maximise their personal effectiveness and through the use of self – the team and organisational effectiveness.

Regardless of its setting, the degree to which any group can be expected to achieve its goals is according to Michaelson et al (not dated) a function of three factors: the knowledge and skills of team members, the resources available to the team, and the cohesiveness of the team for example the degree to which members are committed). The first two determine the potential of the team; the third determines the degree to which the potential is likely to be achieved. The more cohesive the team, the greater the extent to which members will respond to

goal-related team norms, such as rules of conduct for team members and the greater the willingness of members to devote their energy and intellectual and material resources to ensure that the team succeeds.

Unfortunately, in many children services settings, the difficulty of the tasks, teams are expected to perform often creates a dilemma for managers who are trying to develop effective teams. Fostering team cohesiveness and ensuring that they have sufficient resources often require exactly opposite courses of action. For example, increasing the size or the heterogeneity of a team increases the resources it has its disposal but, at the same time, increases the difficulty of developing team cohesiveness. The next section will look at these in more detail.

Achieving Quality Through Local Leadership and Management

Some of the earlier discussion in this document reflects current debates in social work which acknowledge the many tensions between 'management' and 'professionals' particularly where the deployment of managerialist approaches within children services are already well ingrained. Thompson (2003) reminds us that social workers themselves have to become an 'effective organisational operator'. Front line managers can so easily uncritically absorb some of the associated managerialist jargon, which comes with the territory of management. We still have a long way to go to ease relations between government and local leadership which enable front line managers to engage comfortably with what they are being asked to implement on the ground from a policy perspective.

Front line managers need to continue to be dynamic in engaging with debates about how to best manage services in very challenging environments. This is

the essence of professionalism and a practice led approach. Most of us do not become managers in a linear or planned way and we often do not have hindsight or pre-management training to draw on as these often come later. Recognising that preparation for management begins much earlier in an individual's life emphasises the need to recognise the value of the managers' knowledge, skills and value base emerging from their prior experience of direct practice.

This expertise should be valued as it can be shared across the networks we work within as well as sharing up and down the hierarchies in our organisations and provides a powerful means of building organisational knowledge and capital. No one would probably dispute that we need to get better at developing ways of getting the most out of what we have to work with and is inevitable in the face of increasing demands and rising expectations from children, young people and their families with diminishing resources. As the following demonstrates:

> *We are also concerned about the overall quality and consistency of frontline management, and the pressures under which managers and supervisors are working, on a number of counts … It is rare for the training offered to frontline managers to focus on how they support practitioners in becoming resilient in dealing with the emotional impact of the work, or on how they manage the performance of staff. In both areas, managers' report feeling inadequately prepared (DCSF and DH, 2009, p.32).*

By working with and through others, managers can become more effective at networking, coalition building and creating social capital. These are not skills that are necessarily taught on a management development programme but often emerge through the development of tacit or experiential knowledge more often learnt on

the job and direct management practice. Front line managers have to deal with a range of conflicts and constraints operating at the level of practice. Professional discretion can be used in the form of 'quiet challenges' (White, 2009, p.129) to resist managerialist expectations which are not always in the best interests of service users. Whilst relationships between professionals and their managers have been described as antagonistic, these nevertheless obscure the extent to which local managers might also resist the prevailing business culture through the ways in which they interpret policy and cooperate with practitioners in structuring day-to-day practice. Proposed changes in the Professional Capabilities Framework help us all recognise the common outcomes that social workers aim to achieve at different levels for the first time and explicitly emphasises the significance of leadership at different levels.

Hafford-Letchfield (2010) suggests that front line managers should be able to:

- Take a co-productive approach to managing service delivery which recognises front-line staff expertise and voice as a result of their regular interaction with children, young people and their carers and networks.
- Understand the key management processes for developing a vision for the team, service and organisation.
- Understand the nature of partnership work and the importance of participation in developing and taking forward a more inclusive strategy.
- Identify, use and evaluate different management tools commonly used to assess the external and internal environments affecting the strategic and operational direction of the service.
- Engage with the long-term view and develop a much broader perspective on how to go about shaping future services.

In their report High expectations, High Support and High Challenge, Ofsted (2012) noted that professional judgement needs to be exercised in a context where the right institutional structures and support are provided. Their study of fourteen local authorities successful in providing holistic and supportive systems noted the crucial nature of providing support to front line managers themselves. This was mediated through the provision of a clear planning framework, the managers detailed knowledge of families, their critically reflective and emotionally supportive formal and informal supervision and their direct contact with families (p.5). Those local authorities that offered good support to their front line staff exhibited the following specific features:

- Long term investment in securing a stable and competent staff group, well planned, rigorous recruitment and financial rewards.
- Prioritising the development of high quality supervision alongside other mechanisms that assisted staff with complex and risky decision-making with a strong emphasis on professional relationships.
- Clear expectations within their supervision policy and investment in additional resources to enable frequent supervision.
- Structures and processes to facilitate critical analysis of practice which included support to manage the emotional impact of child protection work.
- Timely, relevant and good quality learning and development opportunities.
- Close and regular scrutiny of practice and supervision through monitoring and audit of staff performance.
- Visibility of senior managers and a no-blame approach in the context of mutual ownership and responsibility for managing risks including partnership work integrated at all levels so that proactive challenge could take place where differences emerged and in the management of change.

Front line managers were particularly noted for their skills in ensuring fair allocation of work and seeking feedback from staff and exercising flexibility between teams where pressures and referrals were high (pp.6 – 8).

Being a Reflective Manager

Diffused and empowered styles of management require meaningful decision-making enabling staff to have more influence over their work and the conditions in which decisions are taken. The process of reflection is used extensively in social work as a method of understanding, exploration, analysis and action planning (Ofsted, 2012, p21).

A managers' role should support emergent process in children's services which encourage autonomy and create opportunities for staff to interconnect in ways that traditional structures fail to enable (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010). According to Taylor and White (2000), most social workers have been trained to use knowledge to create certainty out of uncertainty. Equipping them with the skills to exercise wise judgement under conditions of uncertainty (p.937) however, this also means helping them to interrogate their own knowledge and case reasoning in a more reflexive way. They argue that the current preoccupation with searching for certainty is actually misplaced. As a front line manager, you will need to foster a democratic culture which facilitates the interpretive abilities of all staff through learning and support and encourages insight and critical reflection within your own management practice.

Techniques to Promote Critical Reflection

Tools for critical reflective techniques, such as critical incident analysis can be used to consider positive incidents rather than just negative ones. When did you last inquire into a case that went well? Enhancing

critical reflection helps to consider ethical issues and values in decision making. They are for example, encouraged as an aid within professional supervision where the use of reflective frameworks helps balance educative and pastoral support for staff in the front line as well as managerial and administrative accountabilities.

We like to think of reflection as a special form of thought leading to some type of action. It is a wholehearted approach during which one considers management practice in order to develop a conscious response. This is not only a process of critical self-determination but also a process of becoming aware of the wider influences of societal and ideological assumption, and the ethical and moral beliefs, which lie behind professional practice. Ruch (2000) has identified four types of reflection from the literature:

1. Technical reflection which refers to technical rationality in decision-making and to an empirical analytic level of knowing. It involves decision-making or problem-solving by immediate behaviours or skills and draws on analytic thinking techniques.

2. Practical reflection which refers to a means of identifying and modifying one's own professionals' personal assumptions underpinning practice. This type of reflection looks for alternative responses, enhances professional understanding and facilitates personal insights.

Schön (1991) clarified further three important levels of reflexivity within practical reflection:

i) Knowing in action: being aware of what you have done and what might need to be done;
ii) Reflection in action; making choices and using research-based theories and techniques to effect change;
iii) Reflection on reflection in action; being

able to reflect on the effect of your reflections leading to considerable enhancement of practice.

Yip (2006) likens this to peeling of the layers of an onion, where reflection can go deeper and deeper, starting from being aware of one's performance, to critically assessing the ideology and belief behind one's thinking and feeling in the action. (It is also an example of double-loop learning where the feedback causes the system to change the way it acts).

3. Process reflection with its roots in psychodynamic theory. This type of reflection focuses on both the unconscious and conscious aspects involved in reflection. It takes account of transference and counter-transference between the professional and other people (Ruch, 2000). This approach inevitably involves the development of a 'reflexive' self in interaction with others

.

4. Critical reflection goes further than examining the 'personal' and is aimed at transforming one's professional practice by taking a wider view and challenging existing social, political and cultural conditions. It also involves ethical and moral criticism and judgement because it relies on one's own thinking, perceiving and acting.

Within this model, as a front line manager you should be able to analyse your own potential for reflexivity and develop a deep form of critical reflectivity about ethical and moral assumptions behind practice. The deeper the reflection, the stronger is the individuals' awareness of his or her affect, experiences and cognition. It is also a 'process of self-evaluation, self-analysis, self-recall, self-observation and self-dialogue.

In reflective practice, the individual evaluates his or her own performance, thinking, feeling

and response in practice' (Yip, 2006, p.780).

Within the context of the SWAP programmes, achieving critical reflection, within certain organisational cultures can be a double-edged sword, a 'potent way of confronting sticking points or previous irresolvable dilemmas but its effectiveness may be limited because of the misunderstanding, resistance and anxiety which can result when deep seated assumptions are questioned' (Fook and Askeland, 2007, p521). This may be difficult to achieve in task-centred cultures where staff may not have time to reflect or may feel uncomfortable in having their practice scrutinised. Fook and Askeland (2007) remind us that the more proceduralised or regulation-based workplace cultures become, the more likely they are to cause tensions between bureaucratic and professional demands. This highlights the importance of giving as much value to those skills gained through socialisation as through action, such as offered in the SWAPP philosophy. Playing devils advocate to surface any weakness in analysis, Ofsted suggest asking the following practical questions to help staff come up with their own answers when dealing with complex and risky situations:

• What's the worst-case scenario?
• What could happen tonight/tomorrow?
• How might that have had a different result?
• Why is this the best way of doing things?
• What else was going on for you then?
• What could we do differently to make a small improvement?

Furthermore, some features of the front line managers or leadership style can enhance social work practice such as:

• Presence – developing a vision, engendering pride, respect and trust and using influence.
• Inspiration – motivating by creating high expectations, modelling appropriate

behaviour and using symbols to focus efforts and looking beyond self-interests.

- Individualised consideration – giving personal attention to those you work with, giving them respect and responsibility, including the use of emotional intelligence to foster cooperation within highly emotional interpersonal relationships to achieve better conditions for change.
- Intellectual stimulation – engaging with expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role and continually challenging staff with new ideas and approaches (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010).

Conclusion

Effectiveness in management requires the ability to:

- Achieve quality services through people;
- Cope with uncertainty and change;
- Manage performance by identifying the level of performance required and helping people to achieve these.

Learning to become a manager is also a story of change and is not just about expert knowledge and skills. It is also about thinking systemically and being willing to acknowledge and address power and politics in organisations, and to work effectively through challenges with reference to a professional value system.

Some Preparatory Questions for Front Line Managers

1. How does the current context for your service determine the skills you require? Are there any new areas of skill development that need to be addressed or updated? These might inform your personal objectives for the SWAP programme.

2. When was the last time you paid attention to your own development as a manager? How does discussion about your management knowledge and skills influence your own supervision and appraisal process?

3. How will you get feedback on your development? Do you need to undertake a formal audit or seek feedback? How will your experience of SWAPP be integrated into your own professional development and outcomes against the Professional Capabilities Framework?

Summary

To achieve a step up in performance teams should:

- Recognise that the emotional nature of social work brings particular challenges to team working;
- Understand that the context within which the team operates is important as are the relationships with other teams;
- Retain their focus on their primary task (reason for existence) and keep other distractions (both internal and external) within bounds;
- Recognise and manage unconscious collective processes;
- Focus on the shared system of beliefs, explanations and values which the team has, question them and evolve them as contexts and needs change;
- Use appreciative enquiry when considering the value of contributions from within the team, and contributions from other teams;
- Surface the different approaches of different professional groups and actively manage and make use of them;
- Ensure that all team members are contributing to the team's success and not be solely reliant on a single leader.

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Outcomes – 'the difference' We Want to Make

In intensity of feeling, and not in statistics, lies the power to move the world. But by statistics must this power be guided if it would move the world aright.

Charles Booth, 1889

In this section of the reference document we will be looking at how an outcome-orientated perspective can help keep you in touch with 'the difference' that you came into this work to make.

An outcome-orientated approach encourages:

- Clarity of purpose: It helps to create a clear and compelling image of the difference we hope to make;
- Effective use of feedback: It requires us to develop a systematic way of assessing whether or not we are making the difference that we hope for;
- Evidence-informed practice: - It encourages us to be more disciplined in the choices we make about the sorts of interventions that we believe will make a difference; and
- The primacy of partnerships: It reminds us that the difference we want will only be made through the sustained effort of a partnership.

As a Social Work Advanced Practitioner, feedback of various kinds will play an important role in helping you make sense of your work and judge your progress. By necessity, performance and outcomes data, which may include both quantitative and qualitative measures, will form part of that feedback.

Measurement will help you to:

- Understand the shape and scale of the system that you are working to change;
- Chart the courses and flow-rates of the processes within that system;
- Observe how the system is changing, and is changed by the landscape that it is enacted within;
- Define and agree priorities for change; and
- Judge your progress towards better outcomes.

At this point you might well be asking 'Did I really become an Advanced Practitioner to be involved with computers and performance measures? Surely this is what got us into this mess in the first place?'

In this section we want to offer a different possibility for the way we use statistical measure, by treating them as just one element within a broader approach to feedback. We are using the term feedback here to include all of the different forms of information that is 'fed back' to us from in and around the system. Such feedback is central to Section 1 of the Standards for Employment of Social Workers in England which requires employers to 'Develop a strategy to monitor the effectiveness of their social work delivery". (Social Work Reform Board)

Measuring Social Work

The findings of the Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro, 2011) reveal the extent to which we have now fallen out of love with measurement. However, much of what we have now come to regard as good social work practice has its origins in the quiet, prescient work of a small coterie of childcare researchers who worked in the UK in the late '60s and '70s and '80s.

Like Charles Booth, they believed that measuring things could improve lives. And they were right. Almost.

For over three decades, successive governments invested in child care research

which became 'the power that guided' our national child care policies (For example see the government's "Messages from Research" series). Behind virtually every clause of our legislation lay hundreds of hours of solitary work spent in the dusty filing rooms of social work team offices, gathering data from unruly and unyielding case files. Data that eventually became facts. Facts that revealed the inequities and injustices; the fear and the loneliness that awaited children born into families who could not cope or could not care.

Whilst the UK earned an international reputation for evidence-informed child care policy making, research activity in the profession was not limited to government funded national studies. Many forward-looking local authorities and voluntary organisations had long since established a habit of collaborating with academic research institutions to support their own practice improvement initiatives. By the Nineties, researchers anticipated that with the advent of computer held records, every team office would become its own micro-research institution, gathering and analysing data to support their own longitudinal analysis (Rowe, Hundleby, Garnett, 1989). Indeed, many local authorities began to routinely produce sophisticated "systems monitoring" reports, charting the flows of children and young people through their local services.

Conscious of the limitations of evaluating social work processes, the ambitions of policy makers and researchers began to shift towards understanding what was to become the Holy Grail of child care research - assessing the outcomes of social work interventions. Outcomes in social care can be defined as "The impact, effect of consequence of help received" (Nicholas, Qureshi and Bamford, 2003). For the purposes of evaluation, outcomes are seen to be more valuable than outputs which typically consist of numeric counts

of the units of service provided. Readers should be aware however that the word 'outcome' is commonly used as a short-hand for 'desired outcome'. Used in this way, desired outcomes are goals or aims that describe the hoped for "conditions of well-being for children and families or for whole communities" (Friedman, Garnett and Pinnock, 2005). For example, the Every Child Matters outcomes framework has a desired outcome that children and young people "Stay safe". One of the ways that we can judge the actual outcome of our combined efforts to achieve this is by measuring the rate of hospital inpatient admissions and visits to Accident and Emergency that result from both unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people. Another way might be to undertake a local survey of children and young people to gauge their perceptions of their own personal safety.

Whilst research was led by a desire to improve the life chances of vulnerable children, the advent of managerialism in social work (see Harris, 2003) saw measurement being put to a very different use, namely that of external accountability and control. This shift fundamentally changed the relationship of social workers with the idea of measurement. As Power (1997) observes, 'One logic has developed from a home base in input auditing, focusing on measureable outputs. The other, though not without problems and much less coherent than audit as a practice, is traditionally more sensitive to the complexities of connecting service processes causally to outcomes'.

Evidence to the Munro review reveals how measurement has become something that practitioners regard as done to them, rather than done by them or for them. This shift from gathering data for the internal purpose of learning and improvement to the external purpose of performance accountability has fundamentally changed their relationship

with data. We now have a generation of child care managers who have known nothing else but targets, league tables and inspections. It is clear that for many, performance management has become just that - a performance to be managed.

This potted history of contemporary efforts to 'measure social work' demonstrates an important truth, namely, that why and how you measure things is as important as what you measure. For the Social Work Advanced Practitioner, this means being involved in the effective use of data for reviewing their practice in the way that the SESWE requires them to do. This involvement includes, selecting what should be measured; how it is measured; and the use to which the resulting information is put to.

Why Outcomes?

The Every Child Matters (ECM) outcome statement has been with us now for over decade. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a world where we were not clear about the outcomes that we were working to achieve with and on behalf of young people. However, it is important to remember that the ECM outcomes were not introduced just so we had something to measure. Well-crafted outcome statements define our purpose and therefore bring meaning to our work.

Over the past two decades, significant advances have been made in the way that we approach the practical and conceptual challenges of outcome measurement in children's services (Ben-Arieh, and Goerge, 2006). We have also been introduced to approaches like Mark Friedman's Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) that have given us effective ways of engaging whole partnerships in developing an outcome-orientated approach (Friedman, 2005). Experience suggests that outcome frameworks work best where people have been involved in their creation and testing.

Despite the existence of the national ECM framework, working with staff and partners to create an outcomes statement is a useful exercise in itself. Here are some of the qualities that you should look for when developing statements of desired outcomes (Pinnock, 2012).

- Clear – It is important that we are able to describe for ourselves and for the tax-paying public, in clear unconditional and unambiguous terms, the ends that we are working towards. We must resist attempts to qualify outcome statements with conditional clauses like 'Wherever possible, we will keep children safe by…' or "We will help children achieve their full potential, within available resources".
- Child-centred – Statements like the ECM outcomes remind us that our collective efforts are directed very clearly towards improving children's lives – not some tired and tortured "mission statement" that was knocked up ten years ago on an away day. People will often tell you that they came into social work to "make a difference". Ask them why, and their reasons might be political, humanitarian or faith-based. Outcome statements help us to articulate what that difference might look like.
- Concise – Outcome statements should give us a memorable and portable vision of a desired future. The Munro Review talked about the importance of doing the right thing, above doing things right. In other words, being prepared to challenge procedures and/or custom and practice, when it is clear that adherence to policy will not help achieve the desired outcome. Policy guidance and procedure reference documents have their place, but sometimes you need to go back to purpose and that means retracing the purpose back to the outcomes they are intended to help realise.
- Consensual – Outcome statements should describe a shared purpose that everyone can sign up to. All efforts to improve

outcomes for children and young people rely on collective action. This means that partnership work is not just 'nice to have' – it means that it is unavoidable. Working in partnership requires emotional intelligence as well as professional skills and knowledge. Having a clear set of desired outcomes means that at least people agree about the 'ends' – even if they do not agree on the 'means'.

- Constant– Outcomes should be constant over time and place. They transcend the team, the service, the directorate and the organisation. Obviously we work best when we feel we are part of an organisation that cares deeply about outcomes. Sometimes you might find yourself working in an organisation that feels like it's lost its way. At times like this, you can find yourself revisiting your original vocation – the difference you came into the work to try and make – as a way of getting through difficult times.

- Comprehensive – Good outcomes statements encourage us to see the "whole child" and therefore to be mindful of the interdependencies that lie between them. We have seen how people often feel safer when they are able to draw a tidy fence around their responsibilities – in effect replacing a service silo with an outcome silo. You might even have heard people in partnership meetings say "We'll do 'Healthy' if you do 'Achieve'". This is self-defeating. The whole point of outcome-orientated partnership work is that we acknowledge the unique individual contribution that each makes to the collective effort.

- Challenging – Outcomes need to be inspirational as well as aspirational. By definition, they set us challenging goals. They describe a future state that can only be achieved by successful engagement with whole communities and through dogged perseverance.

It has become common to hear people to talk about "delivering outcomes". We need to recognise that improved outcomes are not commodities that are delivered to the homes of families.

Outcomes are always "work in progress"- progress that is usually made against great adversity. To see them as anything less would be doing a great injustice to the children and young people whose life-chances we're hoping to improve.

Using Feedback

Feedback occurs in all natural systems. A system relies on feedback to survive regardless of whether we choose to recognise it. The first of the three Munro Review reports stressed the vital role that feedback plays in both maintaining the equilibrium of the system and in helping it to adapt and learn over time (Munro,2010). As Margaret Wheatley comments, "All life thrives on feedback and dies without it. We have to know what is going on around us, how our actions impact on others, how the environment is changing, how we're changing. If we don't have access to this kind of information, we can't adapt or grow. Without feedback, we shrivel into routines and develop hard shells that keep newness out. We don't survive for long" (Wheately, 1999).

The use of feedback plays an important role in managing progress towards desired outcomes:

Keeping Track of where we are: Data helps improve the visibility of processes that would otherwise be 'invisible' to managers. For example, managers and practitioners need to understand what is happening within the key processes that we expect will help bring better outcomes for children, young people and their families. This is referred to as "single-loop learning' in the Part One report. So for example, if we

believe that it is important that we respond promptly when the health and well-being of a child is threatened, why wouldn't we want to report on the time it takes us to respond to allegations of neglect or abuse? Similarly, if we believe that care leavers are more likely to make a better start in adult life if they have access to good support systems, why wouldn't we want to know that this is the case?

Learning and Improving: Feedback is the lifeblood of learning. We need to recognise that feedback is pervasive across the systems and is not just what we receive in a monthly performance report. For example, it could include feedback from prospective, present and past users of services. Similarly, it could include feedback about practice issues that come through the staff training and development programme. We use the knowledge that we gain through this process to improve the formal design of service systems and, more importantly, the practice that takes place within and around them. This should apply to both our in-house services and externally commissioned services. This type of feedback is referred to as 'Second-loop' learning in the Part One report. This is feedback that challenges our underlying assumptions and practice norms which in turn helps us to do the right thing. If we understand how to recognise it and listen to feedback, our system will become more resilient and more adaptable.

Being Accountable: The judgements that are made on our progress play an important role in helping to demonstrate the benefits that are being made with public money. It does this first, by demonstrating whether or not services are provided in the way that is expected and second, by showing the difference that we are expecting to help make to the lives of children and young people involved.

Supporting staff: Work with children, young people and their families can be rewarding - but it can also be arduous and stressful. Routine feedback to staff helps people to understand if they are making the difference that they came into this work to make and also to sustain our staff and shape their personal and professional development.

This is very much a feature of the cultural disposition of an organisation and in particular, how it recognises and shares responsibility for both its achievements and its failures. Feedback can also be used in individual one-to-one supervision sessions and in other professional development work such as mentoring and in-house staff training.

Understanding 'What works?' Increasing attention is justifiably being paid to the idea of evidence-informed practices in children's social work services. The prevailing economic climate makes it all the more important that we invest our budgets in ways of working that are supported by the best available evidence of "What works?".

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing our organisations is finding a quiet space to listen to what this feedback is telling us. Simply to "stand still" (Westley, Zimmerman and Pattern, 2007). Far-sighted organisations will create and protect this space whilst the short-sighted will always find a reason for avoiding it. The view that spending time together in critical reflection is 'navel gazing' or a 'waste of public money' is never far away – particularly in times of scarcity. However, we need to remind ourselves that the most expensive features of our practice are the ones that don't work. Do we have to wait for some catastrophic failure to tell us which ones they are?

Key Issues to Consider

Avoid talking about practice as if it where a machine for "delivering better outcomes" - Much of our thinking about change is dominated by the idea of organisations as machines (Pinnock, 2008). There is undoubtedly a comfort for some in the idea that a team of social care professionals can be taught to behave with all the predictability and regularity of a machine. Indeed, the design of early institutions and the processes within them (i.e. hospitals, prisons, orphanages and so on) borrowed ideas from the 19th Century factories because they believed health and well-being could be "mass produced". When we apply machine-based logic to solving complex social problems, we fail. The cost of failure to a social system is usually damaged confidence and damaged relationships. As Seddon points out, rather than learning from this failure, we tend to return to the problem armed with even greater levels of self-defeating specification and control (Seddon, 2008).

Count the things that matter, not just the things that are easy to count. Miners used to carry a canary in a cage to alert themselves to potential hazards, namely, the build up of toxic gases. Like the miners, you need a feedback system of 'lead indicators' that alerts you to potential threats to the critical processes that need to go well if children are to be protected (Pinnock, 2011). So as well as developing reports that tell you about the effects of past actions (feedback), you will need to work on developing reports that help draw your attention to emerging patterns (feed-forward).

For example, as well as getting a weekly report on the number of social worker vacancies, why not ask for a report on the number of social workers that are working their period of notice? Or, as well as getting a report that tells you how many statutory visits have not taken place, why not ask for a report that tells you how many are about to become overdue?

There are no 'magic measures' and no magic measurement system. "What gets measured gets done" has become a popular aphorism amongst the new management class. It's sentiment is typical of the hubris that has resulted from clumsy attempts to imprint private sector management methods on public services.

Because assessing the effectiveness of social work practice is such a complex undertaking, we end up in a position where *what gets measured gets done and what gets difficult to measure gets ignored*. This complexity shouldn't be an excuse for not trying. As Westley and colleagues point out in "Getting to Maybe", sometimes we have to be satisfied with less certainty than we'd like (Westley, Zimmerman and Patton, 2007). For example, confidently attributing cause and effect in a complex system like child protection is impossible. Similarly, questions like 'When do we measure?, How do we measure? What do we measure? All need to be understood. This is not the sort of uncertainty and complexity that those charged with 'designing a suite of strategic performance metrics for the corporate dashboard' necessarily want to hear.

Conclusion

In 2002, the Audit Commission undertook a survey of recruitment and retention in the public sector (Audit Commission, 2002). In the section headed 'Why people join', they concluded, "… the biggest single reason that people identify for joining the public sector is the opportunity to 'make a difference'" .

In the section 'Why people leave', they found that the top three reasons were "the sense of being overwhelmed by bureaucracy, paperwork and targets; insufficient

resources, leading to unmanageable workloads; (and) a lack of autonomy…". Far from abating, in the decade that followed, these torments actually grew in their intensity. It's tempting to suggest that had this feedback been used by the Audit Commission and the government as an example of double-loop learning, perhaps we wouldn't have needed the Munro Review to tell us eight years later that the child protection system had become *over-bureaucratised and focused on compliance instead of one that values and develops professional expertise and is focused on the safety and welfare of children and young people* (Munro, 2011).

Summary

Measurement will help you to:

- Understand the shape and scale of the system you are working to change;
- Chart the courses and flow rates of the processes within that system;
- Observe how the system is changing and is changed by the landscape that it is enacted within;
- Define and agree priorities for change;
- Judge your progress towards better outcomes.

You should be measuring outcomes and the key processes that you are expecting will lead to better outcomes.

Statements of outcomes should be:

Clear, Child-centred, Concise, Consensual, Constant, Comprehensive, and Challenging.

You need to use feedback to:

- Keep track of where you are;
- Learn and improve;
- Be accountable;
- Support your staff.

Remember count the things that matter, not the things that are easy to count!

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Engaging Service Users and Communities in Shaping Service Delivery

This section is about the involvement of users (children and parents) in decisions relating to their own support and also engagement of users and the community in wider aspects of service design and delivery.

User involvement will need to be demonstrated in any peer support programme so that we can learn about what participation activities are effective and have outcomes that genuinely empower children, young people and their carers as well as shaping the services they receive.

As practitioners, you will have had experience of involving users in decisions about their individual support arrangements, whereas, as managers, there is an opportunity to think about broader levels of user involvement in the design, planning, running and evaluation of services. However, whether user participation actually influences changes within children's services remains debatable and is an area that we are still learning about.

Critically, Ofsted (2012) found that being well supported enabled social workers to use their authority and power thoughtfully in children's and young people's interests towards a more participatory model. Social workers tended to be honest and clear with parents about what had to change and by feeling valued themselves were then able to work positively with parents. For instance, they identified and tackled drift in planning and used their authority to challenge lack of cooperation. According to parents:

Their worries, anxieties and emotional distress were reduced when given the opportunity to talk with social workers and/or therapist about their feelings and as they saw a parent's behaviour changing……and they became less anxious and happier. Parents gained insight into their day-to-day parenting which enabled them to be more reliable and less confrontational with their children (p.12).

Consequently a key role for the SWAPP manager is ensuring that front line social workers are effectively supported as this is vital in ensuring appropriate and effective engagement and empowerment of children and families.

Participation of Children, Young People and Families

The participation of children and young people in their own care and support is now widely accepted, supported by statute and enhanced by specific practice guidance (Beresford, 2007). All social work managers will be aware that making progress with user involvement in service development might be one of the most valuable contributions they can make in improving services.

Managing service user involvement in Children's Services Wright et al (2006) recommend a whole systems approach to effective service user participation. This incorporates four interactive elements:

1. The importance of culture where the ethos of the service demonstrates a commitment to participation;
2. The way in which an organisation's infrastructure facilitates any planning development and resourcing of participation;
3. Direct social work practice, in which methods of working and the skills and knowledge of staff enable service users to really become involved;
4. Evidence on the impact of participation through monitoring and evaluation which is able to capture changes affected by participation and finding ways of reviewing and communicating these.

It is also important to consider the support needed by staff and what is needed by service users.

What is Needed by Staff:

- Understanding what participation means and why it is important;
- Understanding the potential impact of participation (on service users and the organisation);
- Opportunity to explore attitudes towards participation and working in partnership with children and young people;
- Knowledge about different methods that can be used to involve children, young people and families;
- Communication techniques that enable the involvement of all children, young people and families;
- The ability to be responsive and sensitive to the individual needs of children, young people and families;
- Opportunity to develop imaginative and creative techniques;
- Knowledge about how to work with children, young people and families safely and establish appropriate boundaries for their involvement.

What is Needed by Children, Young People and Families:

- Understanding what participation means for them and why is it important;
- Understanding the potential impact and limits of participation (on children, young people and families and the organisation);
- Opportunity to explore attitudes to participation and working in partnership with workers;
- Knowledge about different methods that might be used to involve children and young people;
- Opportunity to explore how they would like to be able to participate and what they would like to see changed;
- Team-building activities that enable the

development of such skills as listening, being responsive to others, taking responsibility for specific roles, debating, communicating;
- Opportunity to develop confidence and skills in expressing their own views as well as those of other children, young people and families.

Case Study

A one-year old boy was made subject of a child protection plan as a result of neglect. His young mother had a long history of involvement with children's social care and was described as autistic. Her two older children were cared for by family members. The social worker took over work with the child during the plan at a point where his mother denied that support. The social workers took time to engage her, using pictures and diagrams to explain why her son was subject to a plan and what needed to change. Extended family members were involved in this work and Family Group Conferencing was used. The team manager had a good knowledge of the mother as she worked with her as a teenager. The manager encouraged the social worker to spend time in painstaking engagement and to identify and feedback small signs of positive change. The manager worked directly with health agencies to address their concerns and seek shared solutions. As things improved the mother joined a local women's group and with this community support was able to gradually positively engage and actively seek counselling and other material support. (Source: adapted from Ofsted, 2012, p.20).

Engaging with Community Perspectives

Local practitioners often have detailed knowledge of community needs and are a good source of information about gaps in service provision. Their ability to facilitate exchange with local communities and groups can be utilised to identify those who may

not have the capacity to make themselves known under their own steam. Similarly, a continuous and creative dialogue between managers and local citizens involves sharing some of the dilemmas, seeking views and adapting more strategic and local decisions accordingly, taking into account the principles of equity and accessibility. When considering engaging with communities it will be important to ensure that elected members, including those who have a geographic responsibility for the area concerned, are consulted and where appropriate involved in any activity.

Methods for promoting and engaging the community may involve:

• Formal or statutory mechanism such as formal consultation processes, public hearings or governance arrangements;
• Information and communication in the form of published newsletters, websites, leaflets or engagement with the media;
• Face-to-face interaction;
• Deliberate methods such as citizen / children's panels/councils or juries;
• Devolving responsibilities to user-led organisations to undertake consultations on your behalf.

Community participation is traditionally modelled as an incremental approach for example by thinking about climbing a ladder which starts with 'informing', moving through 'consulting' to 'involving', 'collaborating' and finally to 'empowerment' (Arnstein, 1969). The model of an ascending or developmental approach to increasing user involvement provides a useful tool for benchmarking and reflecting on how far your service is developed in terms of these different stages, with a number of agencies believing themselves to be collaborating when they are actually only consulting. Within the SWAPP process you will be looking for clear evidence of engagement at these different levels and evaluating the different types of issues that

the service is collaborating on. Some key questions:

• Is the collaboration driven by the needs of the service or the community's priorities?
• How might you capture the outcomes of the collaboration from a service user or community perspective?

According to Coates and Passmore (2008), another way of thinking about the process is to envisage what participation looks like from both inside and outside the organisation. This is where managers and citizens may have different viewpoints about what is most important or a priority for children, young people, carers and their support networks. Developing an 'outside-in' frame of reference means striking a balance between an organisations internal priorities and the community's concerns with particular issues. Active outreach is an activity that we have to do to really grapple with these concerns particularly for hard to reach communities.

For example, outreach can be used as a means of reaching out to and supporting families and shows commitment to supporting families across a wide range of issues, helping parents and carers to deal with problems which may be complex and resistant to solution (DCSF, 2009a). Evaluating effective outreach also needs to capture and evaluate how far parents and carers value the support they receive and whether they are able to explicitly describe the benefits for their children and for themselves.

Ways of Working that Underpin Effective Community Engagement

Among professionals, there is a consensus that effective outreach requires particular skills and experience as well as commitment and that it works best where it is supported by good multi-agency partnerships and in particular, by data-sharing. McGivney

(2000) has defined outreach as a process that involves going out from a specific organisation or centre to work in locations with sets of people who typically do not or cannot avail themselves of the services of that centre - as a marketing or recruitment strategy; as a delivery mechanism; as a networking process; and a method or approach to working with people. There is also agreement that effective outreach needs to be underpinned by clear aims and measurable outcomes, but the ways in which outcomes are conceptualised vary from setting to setting.

A scoping study by the DCSF (2009a) considered the role of parents and carers as volunteers and suitable outreach workers. They identified that this approach increased capacity and provided a means of developing a peer-support model. Despite concerns about confidentiality, most professionals consulted felt that this could be overcome and that investing in training was the key to success. Views about why families might not make use of services were varied but common ones included factors within the individual or family, as distinct from practical barriers. Language barriers were most frequently cited, followed by lack of confidence or self-worth, or worries about losing children (DCSF, 2009a, p63).

Those community members' who were successfully engaged in outreach reflected the empowering or actualising nature of what they are trying to do. Within this study, gaining the trust of parents and carers is seen both as a process and as an outcome in itself. This particular study evidenced an important factor which relates to the use of parents, carers and local community groups, whose voices in reaching particular groups of families cannot be overstated. This was evident across a range of work, from engaging fathers to ethnic and religious minorities, asylum seekers and those with reasons for wishing to avoid contact with

services (p.95).

The following guidance provides a list of principles that can be used to promote community participation:

- Involvement – identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement;
- Support – identify and overcome any barriers to involvement;
- Planning – gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and time scale of the engagement and actions to be taken;
- Methods – agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose;
- Workings together – agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently;
- Sharing information – ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants;
- Working with others – work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement;
- Improvement – actively develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants;
- Feedback – the outcomes of the engagement to the wider community and the agencies affected;
- Monitoring and evaluation – monitor and evaluate whether engagement achieves its purposes and meets national standards.

Leadership and Participation

Some hierarchical structures may make participation a challenge and it is important in these situations to avoid tokenism where participation doesn't really fit with the short-term results orientation of the organisation. Pine and Healy (2007) assert that it is never efficient to reach a decision that no one will implement or commit to because no one has consulted or involved those being affected.

This is an important factor to consider in the SWAP programme.

Commitment to participation should be visible in the principles held and the practice demonstrated by the senior management team. These can then be built into the service or organisation's values and reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, and communication and business improvement activities. Commitment to participation should extend to staff development activities where opportunities are provided to enable staff to develop the skills and attitudes to engage effectively with children, young people and their families and carers as part of their everyday work.

Skills in developing participation and partnerships now permeate all management and professional activity although this requires further development. In successful organisations, service user involvement sits close to corporate decision-making and has representation on those structures which help to oversee service user involvement. Some have argued however (Carr, 2007) that user participation in social work and social care has predominantly been based on a consumerist agenda, relying more on methods that are bureaucratic, managerial and professionally driven. This development, it is suggested, is not always successful in increasing actual personal and political power and ultimately the empowerment of service users, but in many ways control of the system can still remain with the service or organisation (Carr 2007).

What is being implied here is that user participation may be instrumentalised to a degree where it becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Any participation strategies have to consider the practical and resource implications as well as the moral and rights based ones which are based on the direct experiences and perspectives of service users and their representative organisations.

Evaluation

In considering these areas, you will have identified a number of reasons why managers may need to evaluate user involvement and initiatives that seek to increase participation. There is an ethical obligation to ensure that all interventions in social care practices are examined and reviewed regularly in terms of management accountability (Hafford-Letchfield 2010).

Many aspects of evaluation of user involvement also contribute to regulatory and statutory requirements. Organisations that have grown accustomed to such evaluation have sometimes been led into an approach to evaluation based on a need to prove – that we are OK, good, very good and so on. Here, the emphasis might profitably be on a commitment to improve. It is unlikely that managers will get everything right first time, so this process fits the broader process of seeking continuous improvement.

Evaluation inevitably has a political dimension to it as politics and practices will have their sponsors and advocates with both positive and negative investment in the outcomes. This indicates that evaluation is not an activity for managers sensitive to criticism or controversy which may arise when evaluating directly with service users. The evaluating manager will need to have strong conflict-resolution skills and diversity in perspective, using people management and good communication skills in order to get the best out of everyone involved (Hafford-Letchfield 2010).

Whilst user involvement is right in itself, users do not want to waste their time engaged with activities that make no difference. Evaluation should therefore concern both the process and outcomes

of participation work and seek to identify any learning from it that can be shared, discussed and agreed.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that commitment to participation should be visible in the principles held and the practices demonstrated by managers. These can be built in to your every day practice where user involvement is reflected within planning, service delivery, how services are resourced, day-to-day communication and activities designed to improve services.

Action Checklist

1. Think how user involvement and participation can be involved in your SWAP programme right from the outset and think about how children, young people, their carers, and communities can also be involved in exchange and networking.

2. Train staff and service users in skills to increase their confidence in working in social work and social care hierarchies and evaluate the impact of user involvement at different levels.

Summary

In successful organisations service user involvement sits close to corporate decision making.

A whole system approach is advocated where:

- The service ethos demonstrates commitment to participation;
- The organisational infrastructure facilitates it;
- Social work practice enables users to be involved;
- Participation is evaluated and kept visible

through communication of changes which have been influenced by it.

This should be supported by measures in which the wider community can participate in the formulation and monitoring of policy and service provision.

Resources

Further resources on user participation can be viewed here. Wright, P, Turner, C, Clay, D, Mills, H.(2006) The participation of children and young people in developing social care. http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide11/

There is considerable consistency and clarity in the headline messages from these guidance materials and the table below provides a helpful checklist for your SWAP programme.

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Figure 8: Promoting User Participation (adapted from Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2008, p 84)

Issues to consider	Notes for assessing our own developments and plans
1. Have we distinguished between the differing needs of children, young people and their carers within our user involvement strategy?	
2. What are the likely issues to ensure access to participation for each group and their access needs?	
3. Have we provided training for both children, young people and their carers about what is expected and have we equipped them with the necessary skills?	
4. Have staff – including managers – been trained and equipped for user involvement?	
5. Do we have a clear, non-bureaucratic process for resourcing involvement that service users can easily use and enables us to reimburse expenses?	
6. Have we the structures and communication strategy and processes in place to enable us to jointly negotiate the aims and expectations about user participation?	
7. Is our participation strategy fit for purpose and set out to do what it says on the tin?	
8. Have we agreed the ground rules and published them including what we are not able to consult or address in our participation strategy?	
9. Do the actions and activities undertaken show respect and take account of the diversity in our service users?	
10. Have we an infrastructure that enables user involvement to take place from the front line as well as in our more strategic groups and decision making?	
11. Are there clear lines of accountability to make sure that managers and senior managers have direct knowledge and relationships with those contributing through involvement.	
12. Have we invested in user controlled organisations and the relevant community	

Preparation of First Line Managers

How to Help as Opposed to Managing

Edgar Schein (2009) proposes that *Helping or help is giving someone the ability to do something that they cannot do for themselves …* and much of this section of the guide is based on Schein's thinking and around this seemingly simple idea. However, the guidance also draws on extensive direct experience of organisational consultancy.

It is stating the obvious to say that managing a service and trying to help a service improve through peer support or consultancy are different tasks. However it is surprising how many people either confuse the roles or think they are the same.

If you are managing a service area, it is your primary responsibility to ensure that service is managed well, with all that this entails including being held to account for how the service area is run and managed. If you are acting as a SWAPP manager or providing peer support or internal consultancy you have a different set of responsibilities. Exactly what those responsibilities are should have been clarified as part of the agreement that led to your taking on the role although you might anticipate that these may change. Broadly speaking these responsibilities will be about helping a manager or service area to improve what they do. This might be through mentoring, coaching, peer challenge or another agreed role. These are roles that are much closer to consultancy than to managing.

Before moving forward it is worth noting that

it is very useful to have a good understanding of your role and what is expected of you or in other words to have a clear commission although to be honest the real world doesn't always provide this.

It is also important to acknowledge people don't always understand the issues that they need help with and even where they do, factors such as concern about your views of their professional competence can lead people to understate or misstate the issues that they are grappling with. Put more simply the presenting issue may not be the underlying issue that needs to be addressed. Consequently you will need to be flexible if you want to be effective in helping someone and work with them as the nature of the issues they are facing are revealed or clarified. The section Managing in Complexity Working With Emergence might assist with this.

You also need to be aware of your own anxieties about working with the unknown, and the applicability of your own skills and knowledge and to be alert to any defensive responses that this may create. As is outlined in more detail below it is important as you enter into this new context to approach it with an open mind and suspend your beliefs about what is taking place.

Letting go of Control - Only Having Influence

As is noted above, working in a service as a SWAPP Manager or whilst providing peer support comes with a different set of responsibilities to managing within a

service. You are there to provide advice and assistance in order to help to improve the service, but you are not there to manage.

Given that you have expertise in the area of work and that you probably already manage such services it is to be assumed you are capable of managing within the service you are helping. However whilst you will draw on skills you have learnt as a manager you are applying them in a different way and in a different role and context.

Through your role as a SWAPP manager you might be described as *having power or influence without responsibility.* This is power that comes from your position as advisor and through the fact that it will be known that you have the status as a manager in another service. It may also be known or perceived that you can access and are able to directly influence more senior managers. This is power that you need to personally acknowledge and then exercise with caution and act judiciously. You are entering into an existing set of power and other dynamics within a service and you want to avoid alienating the people you are there to help, potentially creating defensive responses. Reference can usefully be made to the section of the guide on *Overcoming Defensive Responses.*

When you see somebody doing something and feel that you would be better at the task the temptation can be to try to take the task over and do it yourself. This is a temptation that needs to be resisted when working as a SWAPP manager. If you try to take over managing the service you will cause confusion regarding your role and the role of the manager. You will also be undermining the authority of the manager you are there to help which might in turn lead to them being resistant to your help.

You also need to act carefully when working with the staff in the service. It might be

tempting to start advising the staff on the actions they need to take, they may take this advice as instruction and act on the advice you have given. This in effect means you are acting or substituting as a manager. This is a position that you need to actively avoid. This means being very clear about your role and when you give advice or are asked for your opinion making a very clear statement such as; *I am not a manager in this service, if you need management advice you need to speak with the service manager, however in my view … .* In particular you should be vigilant in ensuring that you do not become directly involved in case decision making. Again, being clear if you advise that this is your viewpoint and not any kind of management advice.

The above might be described as *being boundried* regarding your role as an advisor and respecting the role of the managers you are there to help.

Expert or Humble Helper?

A common trap that novice consultants fall into (and some who are not novices) is that the primary or sole role of the consultant or in this case the SWAPP manager is to provide expertise. We would argue that this is just one part of the role and that those who have more awareness and experience will usually start from a different position. If we enter an organisation without fully understanding the problem and the context and if as Schein (2009) recognises, we provide help that is not requested we potentially set up a defensive response. As is explored in the section of the guide Overcoming Defensive Responses, a defensive response from an individual or organisation presents an immediate block to learning. How would you feel if an outside expert a stranger to your context, dropped into your office and told you how to do your job?

Schein (2009) advocates a three layered

process that is reflected in the following:

Starting with what Schein calls *humble inquiry.* How can I help, tell me more ... and so forth. There are a range of approaches to this phase of the work, open questions being a very useful starting point. What you are trying to do at this stage is to understand the problem from the client services perspective. This is an essential starting position.

In any helping situation, "humble inquiry" is a key intervention to equilibrate the relationship between the vulnerable person asking for help and the powerful helper (Schein 2009)*.*

The second stage is that of *diagnostic questions* enabling the client to think diagnostically, but not giving advice. This is about helping the client to look at the issue that is of concern, exploring how they might go on without suggesting a preferred option.

The third and final layer which Schein describes as *confrontative inquiry* is more direct and can include giving advice.

There is a parallel between humble enquiry and the not knowing position adopted within therapy by Anderson (2005):

Not-knowing refers to the attitude and belief that the therapist does not have access to privileged information, can never fully understand another person; and always needs to learn more about what has been said or not said . . . not-knowing means the therapist is humble about what she or he knows.

Not-knowing involves respectful listening - listening in an active and responsive way. The therapist listens in a way that shows the client to have something worth hearing. Having an authentic commitment to being

open to the other person's story is critical to dialogue.

From the above we can see Edgar Schein a leading organisational consultant and theorist and Tom Anderson a leading systemic family therapist both advocating the helper (consultant or therapist) adopt a humble or not knowing position to their enquiry. Both also seem to be recognising that the client system is knowledgeable about themselves and that understanding the client position is essential in moving towards another level of dialogue and understanding. Both of the approaches appear to have a tentative and emergent feel and in that regard also encapsulate an intuitive approach.

The best form of help is when the recipient says something like *I know what I need to do now …* without any direct advice being given. Why? Because the consultation has provoked fresh insight into the issue that was troubling them and importantly, because they got to where they needed to be themselves, they are much more likely to carry through the solution they have found.

Whilst the starting point is always *humble inquiry*, the above is not being suggested as a linear process, in practice you may move through all three within a piece of work and in an individual session perhaps particularly stages one and two. Within these kinds of conversations there is usually an ebb and flow, silence is not a gap to be filled but a moment or more in which to reflect. This reflects Edgar Schein's (1988) comments regarding process consultation that:

It is emphasized that process consultation is a kind of philosophy about and attitude toward the process of helping individuals, groups and organisations. It is not merely a set of techniques to be compared to and contrasted with other techniques.

This is not about following a recipe or

applying a technique. It is about working with the participants helping to co-create different and hopefully more constructive futures.

When engaged in these kinds of conversations which might be with an individual or when working with a group, as you move through different layers you can mark the shift with comments such as *I am really curious about* … or *Let me help you to think about this* … or *Let me give you some advice* … and so on. Using this sort of device is important in marking which position you are speaking from.

Summary

It is important to recognise the position and context within which you are working and not fall into the trap of trying to manage the service or to act as an outside expert who is there to tell the service how it should operate.

A helping approach is deliberately reflective and rarely directly authoritative. However this is not a soft approach and it is not about avoiding the hard issues. Indeed experience shows that applied skilfully this approach can get very quickly to the heart of the issues that need to be explored.

Part of the art is creating trust and avoiding creating a defensive response in the person who is being helped. It's hard for many people to accept they have a problem and it can be even harder to accept help. So the help being given needs to provided in a way that is respectful of the fact that someone has come seeking help.

Resources

Interview with Edgar Schein on helping available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bknGdA_xdw

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Observing the Organisation the Cultural Dimensions

The key reason you are working in the organisation as a SWAPP Manager is to help them improve what they do. You are in the ideal place as an outsider to view what goes on with a fresh pair of eyes and to comment from that viewpoint.

Observation is a key skill for a social worker. This key skill needs to be employed when entering another organisation in order to provide them with assistance. As a newcomer you will be best placed to pick up the general tenor of what is happening. For those who are ever present in the organisation they may not even notice it is happening, to them it can just be normal. So:

- What happens when you go through the front door?
- How are you treated as a visitor?
- What do you notice about how others are treated (work colleagues, managers, members of the public, service users, and other external visitors)?
- What do you notice about the reception area and other parts of the building (the notices, the leaflets, parking arrangements and office layout)?

What do these things tell you about how the place works? Pay attention to what is not happening as well as what is. Don't make assumptions about why things are as they are, ask questions. What, why, where, when, how and who.

In particular who is involved in what, and how do they respond. A revealing question may be to ask individuals what the culture is like. Organisational cultures can be defined *as the way we do things around here* and are often maintained even at the expense of meeting the objectives and outcomes which the organisation sets itself.

You may need to aim to *name the culture* as this could in itself help the organisation to move forward.

So look for information about processes and how they are used by the people concerned. In particular how child in need and protection cases are identified, allocated, planned and signed off. Does actual practice conform to what you have been told or read about or is it quite different?

What measurements are being taken? Are they just quantitative or are there qualitative elements? Remember the phrase *what gets measured gets done* and hence what isn't measured may not get done. The measures used may be skewing what happens on the ground.

How are the individuals and groups of people involved with these processes behaving? Is there evidence of negative behaviour such as denial (there is no problem), avoidance (I know there is an issue but I'm going to sidestep it), and projection (it's not my problem it's theirs). What you should hope to find is the opposite i.e. acceptance (there is a problem), engagement (I am dealing with it), and responsibility (it is my job to resolve it).

Test the atmosphere, what does it feel like? Is it different for different groups? Do staff enjoy their work or at least enjoy the camaraderie of their colleagues. Are there means of compensating for what is a difficult and at times thankless task? Is there some humour present to lighten the seriousness of situations? A simple but often revealing question is Do you enjoy coming to work?

What are the stories that people tell you about? These will usually be significant events that have stayed in people's minds and can consequently impact on the way in which things are done. These may be success stories which spur people on but are often about when things go wrong or when

people believe that they weren't treated appropriately. You may not always find out about these early on, but stories will exist so keep listening for them.

It is a truism that social work is carried out almost entirely through people hence staff are an organisations principle asset in delivering a quality service. So what do you notice about the make-up of the workforce? Are they young or old, experienced or inexperienced? Have they come from the local area or further afield? Does the ethnic mix of the workforce reflect the ethnic mix of the community? Are the relevant ethnic cultures taken account of? How long have people been in post? Is it easy to recruit suitably skilled and qualified people? Are there differences in make-up between the frontline staff and the management levels? There isn't a right answer to any of these questions but whatever the answer is may impact on the organisation's ability to sustain its current level of performance and improve it in future.

As a SWAPP manager you will be the new person on the block. You should be able to view things with a fresh pair of eyes untainted by what has gone before. Make notes of what you have seen for future collation and consideration or keep a journal. Any conclusions you draw will need to be thought through and tested out. This is further expanded on in later sections.

You will also need to ensure that you personally tune into the change processes which are used in the organisation you have been seconded to. One of your tasks might be to assist the organisation in gaining the best from their approach. This could be by asking appropriate questions to help them reflect on how and what they are doing; it might also be the case that you may be asked to contribute your observations on their progress.

It may be helpful to compare and contrast what you are observing with what you know from experience of other organisations, but don't assume it's the same until you've thought it through. Care also needs to be taken that you don't assume that what you are familiar with in your host organisation is any better than what you are observing.

Summary

Observe what goes on from when you first enter the new organisation. Check out:

- What happens to you;
- What happens to the people involved, who does what and when;
- Ask questions particularly about the culture;
- Find out what is measured and why;
- Look for negative and positive behaviours;
- Test out the atmosphere;
- Record your observations for future reference.

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Working Within Another Organisation

This section looks at how you might approach working with a different organisation and understanding what goes on. In particular it focuses on the concept of helping and what this might mean for SWAPP Managers and others trying to carry this out.

You may know how to do things well in your organisation but that does not mean you do in another. You first need to understand what it is this other organisation is trying to do and more importantly why it is trying to do it. You may not get to this level of understanding initially, and indeed people will not necessarily tell you at first. So check it out even if you think it looks familiar.

History is important. Organisations get to where they get to because of things that happened in the past and because of individual's actions and omissions. Some of these individuals may no longer be there but some behaviours could have been left behind as a consequence of their presence. So ask questions, especially revealing ones. Why are things like this, what are people trying to achieve, and what they would like help with. It is particularly important to ask how and who questions rather than what since this will elicit information about the approach being taken and the level of involvement of individuals and groups.

Your role should not be about telling them what to do but getting them to see there might be alternative ways of doing things. This is a kind of *if you're trying to do that, had you thought about doing this?* approach. If the organisation is generally defensive when responding to this approach, for example *we tried that but it didn't work,* you may need to press further to find out why it didn't and what the context was at the time. It may have been an individual who stopped it

and it might be the person you are speaking to, or it might be organisational culture or defensiveness. Organisations have long collective memories and these memories may be different for different levels of staff.

One of the best ways of approaching working with another organisation is to focus on helping. This approach is championed by Edgar Schein who sees employees helping managers to achieve results, and managers helping staff to do the work. For you as a secondee in a peer support role it means understanding what it is everyone is trying to do and asking them what they need help with. Schein (2009) emphasises the need to understand what help someone is seeking:

> *Helping or help is giving someone the ability to do something that they cannot do for themselves and in that definition one can already see why helping is difficult. Because very often we try to help someone to do something that they could do for themselves, if we do that, we risk insulting them and making them feel less than they are….*

Once you understand what help they might need you might then be able to suggest how you could help them and how they might help themselves. However, do also remember that people may not fully understand the help they need or may be reluctant to identify areas of vulnerability. Consequently the help they ask for may not be the help they really need. Help needs to be offered skilfully and sensitively because when all is said and done they have to continue making their organisation function effectively whereas you can return to your parent organisation.

In order to be most effective at helping you need to understand your own personal style and approach. This comes from being the person you are. It is what enables you to achieve things and deliver success in what you do. One of the easiest instruments to

use to identify your style and approach is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (Briggs-Myers, 2000). This is based around Jungian psychology and is naturally based i.e. you are born with your style. You can of course nurture it and use it to best advantage, and also develop other aspects which aren't a natural part of your style. The MBTI® used together with FIRO-B (Ryan1989) can be used to describe the general tenor of your interpersonal interactions.

Your personal style may or may not be a good natural fit with the organisation you are seconded into. This is why some people are more successful in certain places than in others. The better the fit the easier it will be to operate effectively, the less the fit the more energy and effort will be required to achieve success. Using reflective space may help you to maximise your impact.

Your role may include the need to challenge what the organisation is doing. It is clearly important that this is done in an appropriate way. If you follow the approach of helping you should have asked a range of questions to assist you in understanding what it is they are trying to do and why. You should then be able to tell them about things you've noticed to see whether they have noticed them also. This may then give you the basis for making suggestions along the lines of *had you thought about doing …,* which may help them in moving forward. Remember that you're a fresh pair of eyes and not an expert, but you do have both experience and expertise to draw upon.

As a general approach it often helps to discuss changes as you are working with people and not wait till the end of your secondment to produce a report. The process should be about helping the organisation to learn and to experiment with new ways of doing things which may lead to improved results for both service users and the organisation itself.

It may be very tempting to put yourself into a managerial frame of mind since you may be most familiar with that role. However, as has already been stated you do not have that role. To focus on helping you may need to ask many questions, read many documents, and shadow staff as they undertake various tasks. The more information you collect the more informed your subsequent helping is likely to be. In the next section there is guidance on seeing patterns and connections in what you will have found.

There may be instances where a SWAPP manager is seconded to an organisation which operates very differently from the one that they are used to. It may be tempting to try to align your comments to get them to move more closely to what for you may be a more familiar position. Remember, your organisation got to where it is because of its own context and history, what works for you may not work for them. They are likely to be best served by your looking for what is good about what they do and what might benefit from some improvement. This may also cause you to reflect about the organisation you normally work in and what might be possible changes there. The most beneficial approach might be neither the one you are used to nor that which you are now examining, it might lie in a different direction.

Summary

However familiar you are with child care and child protection organisations this one is different. You need to:

- Understand the organisational context and where it originated from;
- Tune your questions to ascertaining the real underlying answers behind what you might be first presented with;
- Seek to understand and identify what help they might need;
- Ensure you understand your own personal style and approach and how this impacts

on others;

- Offer help at appropriate points in discussion with others;
- Avoid the temptation to merely transplant a solution you are familiar with from elsewhere.

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Overcoming Defensive Responses

This section shows you how to identify and address organisational defensive responses so that you can help to remove some of the potential barriers to improvement.

Organizational defensive routines are any kind of action designed to protect the players, and do so in such a way that it prevents learning for what might be embarrassing or threatening. These defensive routines really support a defensive mindset, and they support it in an underground manner, not in an above-ground manner. (Argyris 2004)

Chris Argyris (1990 and 2004) argues that defensive behaviours are the major inhibitor to organisational learning because they prevent underlying assumptions and norms being challenged. As a result of defensive routines Argyris argues that most organisations become stuck in single loop learning where organisational development fails to question the underlying assumptions that underpin actions and behaviours.

Double loop learning occurs where, rather than simply trying to improve existing processes, the underlying norms and assumptions underpinning such processes are challenged and new ways to act developed. The section of the Reference Guide titled *Creating Double Loop Learning* provides further discussion on this area of thinking.

However, it would be foolish to believe that overcoming defensive routines and creating double loop learning is an easy task. Argyris (2004) concludes that:

Defensive reasoning is omnipresent and powerful. It inhibits learning, especially when learning is most needed, when it is used to challenge existing routines and the status quo, and to innovate. Defensive reasoning is dangerous to organizational performance and effectiveness.

Ahmed and Jeannine always argue in management team meetings. Agreements are then made which Mary never agreed with because she feels unable to or won't challenge Ahmed or Jeannine about, but which consequently she never actions. Teams that are *good at ideas* but not good at *completing finishing*. These are simple examples of defensive behaviours that block organisational progress and learning. (Defensive behaviours may also be much more complex and much harder to identity than these).

One of the key functions of children's services teams, is managing and reducing the risk of harm that may be present for those children and young people and in some cases the risks they may present to others. Where there are defensive routines accompanied by destructive tensions within management teams and their staff groups or indeed across organisations, these dynamics are likely to be adversely affecting decision making and direct work with children and their families. Exploring and identifying these dynamics can be highly beneficial although where they are deeply ingrained or where relationships are strained this is an area where experienced and specialist facilitation is usually required.

Emotionally stable non-defensive management teams that are competent to manage organisational change and risk are essential in developing a learning organisation. Part of the role of the SWAP Manager might be in observing where defensive responses are hindering the organisation and assisting the organisation to recognise that it is vital that they are addressed.

Reducing Defensive Responses

Recognition of how defensive responses can reduce learning is important for anyone who is acting as an organisational change agent be they a manager, someone providing peer support or challenge or an internal or external consultant. Failure to work in ways which reduce defensive responses is likely to significantly affect the effectiveness of any intervention. Outlined below are some ways of working that can assist with this.

Neutrality

It is very important when you are working to support an organisation that you are aware of the fact that you may be seen as a threat to the existing order of the system and that this has the potential to cause individuals in the system to respond to you in a defensive manner. Such responses can take many forms including passively failing to cooperate, trying to sabotage what you are doing or being verbally aggressive. In managing your own emotions it is important to recognise that this is not usually about you, but is about the change process that you symbolise.

When working in an organisation, one way to reduce such responses to yourself is to adopt a position of neutrality. This has some parallels with a not-knowing position in therapy and applying respectful listening (Anderson 2005). Within the context of family therapy neutrality has been described by Miermont (2005)16 as:

> *Neutrality consists in not getting oneself definitively tied into a coalition with a member of the family, which may lead to de facto opposition to one or more of the other participants. More precisely, neutrality is the specific pragmatic effect of the therapist's overall behaviour on the family. The therapist may feel sympathy or antipathy. Neutrality does not have to do with his or her intrapsychic attitude,*

but is a consequence of the shifting alliances which the therapist strikes up with each member of the family system. The therapist's successive alliances lead him or her to ally with everyone and no one, in order positively to connote the system of which all are necessarily part.

In other words, whilst it is very important to engage in informal conversations or to join the shadow system (Stacey 1997) in order to hear peoples views, it is also important not to get drawn into the organisational dynamics as this may cause you to be positioned on one side or another of any organisational tensions. If this occurs it is likely to increase the resistance to change that you represent and it will also be much more difficult for your views to be heard effectively by all of the participants.

Ask the *Experts*

A way of reducing defensive responses when delivering difficult messages is to begin the discussion by asking what the staff or managers think you have found. This is based on the premise that people are actually experts in their own systems. Ask a simple question such as: What do you think we have found? This will usually reveal extensive knowledge of both the strengths and deficits within an organisation.

Approaching the conversation in this way recognises the existing knowledge of the participants in the conversation. It also shifts the peer reviewer, SWAPP Manager or consultant from being the person who is defining or diagnosing to someone who is collaborating (or helping) in creating understanding of the issues that a service is facing. It also positions the participants as enquirers into their own system rather than listeners on a critical diagnostic. It is also an approach that can reveal at an early stage in a conversation participants knowledge of their own service and how open they

are likely to be when responding to critical information.

Public Interview

It is very important to consider how information is to be delivered, particularly where that information relates to information that casts a negative light on an individual a team or a service or if the information is of a particularly complex nature. The typical approach to delivering information is of course the ubiquitous Powerpoint presentation. Such an approach has its place. However, it is important to recognise the limitations of such an approach to communication. In brief, representing complex subjects in bullet points is reductionist, it is also a didactic approach that inherently positions the presenter as expert. This is not the best starting point to engage with staff or managers in a conversation about issues with complex causes and myriad solutions.

An alternative approach is to provide information by way of a public interview. This is a useful approach if you want to relay complex information in a more involving and less prescriptive way and in contexts where it may be important not to get a defensive response to the information. In a sense this is a way of delivering difficult information in such a way that the messenger doesn't get shot. At its simplest, rather than giving a presentation, you would ask someone from the services to interview you in front of the management team or staff group about your findings or thoughts about the team or service. They should be asked to address a position of curiousness about the work you have been undertaking. It might be useful ahead of such an approach to have discussed this possibility with the interviewer including the likely areas of discussion. (The intent of this is to get the two parties used to discussing the issues rather than creating a scripted or rehearsed conversation).

An example from the authors experience was asking representatives from a management team to adopt a position of enquiry and carry out an interview with a consultant who had audited case files and had difficult messages to deliver. Two managers from the service spent around half an hour in an in depth conversation with the consultant. The other managers then reflected on what they had heard and suggested further questions to be asked of the consultant and the conversation continued for another half hour or so.

The effect of such an approach is entirely different to more linear approaches. Staff and managers become engaged in an inquiry into their own system as opposed to being passive listeners on a diagnostic. In the example given directly above there was very positive feedback both on the approach and the richness of the detail of complex issues which were revealed.

Summary

Defensive responses are an inherent aspect of any change process. Individual and organisational defences are a significant inhibitor on individual and organisational learning. Whenever you are working as an outsider to help an organisation improve it will be important to try not to get caught in the organisational dynamics. It will also be important that when you work in the organisation, that you work in ways that reduce the likelihood of defensive responses and maximise the possibility of creating double-loop learning.

Most organisations get stuck in single loop learning (failure to question underlying assumptions and challenge current processes). Defensive behaviours are not always easy to identify. To endeavour to reduce them:

• Adopt a neutral position, don't get drawn into organisational dynamics;

- Ask the locals, the experts, those who know and use their own systems;
- Ask someone to interview you in the presence of others about what you have found, thereby engaging others in looking at their own system.

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Acting as a Consultant and Change Agent

This section provides an outline of what practical approaches you as a SWAPP Manager will need to focus on when acting as a consultant or change agent.

One of the fundamental challenges about enabling change, is that on the one hand: *the last one to know about the sea is the fish* (Chinese proverb) as it is very hard to recognise what is happening in your immediate context or to see the system and culture you are part of; and yet on the other hand it does not work if you simply import somebody else's solution.

To overcome this paradox, it is often useful to work with somebody who will act a consultant to your team, helping you to step back from your everyday practice, habits and patterns and recognise what is working and what could be improved. It can be a very good developmental opportunity to act as a consultant to another team or function within your organisation.

We suggest that there are seven stages in a simple change process, which are:

1. Creating an appreciative inquiry into what is already happening;
2. Awakening the interest in developing improvements and new approaches;
3. Initiating some experiments;
4. Dealing with resistance to change;
5. Developing new approaches and policies;
6. Developing ongoing training, learning and development processes to support the new activity;
7. Having an on-going audit and review process.

These stages are not just a lineal process, but also a continuous cycle of development.

Step One: Create an Appreciative Inquiry What is already working well?

Many change efforts create unnecessary resistance by starting with the attitude that what is already happening is inadequate and change must be imported from outside. This approach fails to honour the dedicated efforts of those who are already providing good and possibly innovative practice.

Change needs to start by appreciating what is already happening and what individuals and teams have already achieved. These pioneers can then become partners and collaborators in developing the way forward.

Step Two: Awakening the Interest In Developing Approaches

You cannot solve a problem that you do not own, and in organisational change it is no good trying to change an organisation, department or team that does not recognise it needs to change. The impetus for change must come from within. If staff do not own the problem, they are not going to own the solution. External agents, be they more senior managers, supervisors or external consultants, can help the organisation or department to bring to the surface its own perceived strengths and problems; its under utilised capacities and resources; the environmental changes that are acting upon it and its dissatisfaction with the status quo. What they cannot do is create the commitment to change that must come from within.

The two most effective ways of getting commitment to the need for change, are to demonstrate the costs and dangers of current practice and to create a vision that demonstrates the benefits of what could be achieved.

It is also necessary to get commitment to the change process from those who have power

or authority in relation to the department or organisation which wants to change. Change in one part of an organisation has an effect on the other parts of it and can create resistance in those above or to the side which may lead to the change effort being sabotaged. It is important before embarking on any change programme to map out all the interested parties (those who will be affected by the change process) and consider how they can be brought on board.

Bob Garratt, who works with change in global organisations, suggests (1987) asking three questions to ensure that you maximise the political support for your change effort from the wider network:

- **Who knows?** - who has the information about the problem? Not opinions, views, half-truths, official policies, but hard facts which will determine the dimensions of the problem.
- **Who cares?** - who has the emotional investment in getting change made? Again, this is not who talks about the problem but who is involved in and committed to the outcome. These are often the people directly involved in and committed to the outcome .
- **Who can?** - who has the power to reorder resources so that changes occur? ... Who, when faced with facts, commitment and energy, has the power to say 'Yes'.

The fastest change happens when:

- Those at the top create both the climate and framework in which others can get on and make the change happen;
- Those at the bottom move from moaning about the absence to professionally articulating the need for the change;
- Those in middle management take on the responsibility to orchestrate the change process.

Step Three: Initiate Some Experiments

In most organisations you can find not only pockets of good practice (see step one) but also small groups of people who have the desire and commitment to take things forward. Rather than drive change from the centre or top of the organisation it is often more effective to support and build on the creative energy of those in the middle of the organisation. Finding one unit or division that wants to go ahead and try out new practice or have its seniors undertake an external training programme, can often generate interest well beyond its own boundaries. There is a danger of one unit becoming too elitist and special, which can lead to them being both envied and discounted. This can be avoided by having two or three units each engaging with their own experiments into the new approach, or ensuring that the unit is constantly including others in its experiment and inquiry process.

Step Four: Deal with Resistances to Change

However, even in an organisation that achieved a large amount of the above preconditions, change would still create resistance. The difference is that in such an organisation the resistance to the change would have a much better chance of being successfully worked through.

Resistance to change and unwillingness to engage in new behaviour are fuelled by a number of factors:

- Fear of the unknown;
- Lack of information;
- Misinformation;
- Historical factors;
- Threat to core skills and competence;
- Threat to status;
- Threat to power base;
- No perceived benefits;
- Low trust in the organisation;

- Poor relationships;
- Fear of failure;
- Fear of looking stupid;
- Reluctance to experiment;
- Custom bound;
- Reluctance to let go;
- Strong peer group norms.

(Plant 1987)

Kurt Lewin (1952) adapted from physics into the field of human relations the law that says: 'Every force creates its equal and opposite force.' He developed the concept of force-field analysis, that the more you push for change the more resistance you create. This is clearly seen in the following example taken from an intergroup negotiation:

Group A brings three arguments to support their case. Group B brings three arguments to support theirs. Group A, instead of looking for common ground, make the mistake of adding three more reasons why they are right. Group B immediately double the number of reasons for their viewpoint and at the same time raise their voices. Group A raise their decibel level by almost the same amount and start ridiculing the case of group B who, surprise, surprise, reply in kind.

When you try to create any form of change, be it in an individual worker or a whole organisation and you meet resistance, pushing harder for the change just creates more resistance. Lewin suggests that, instead, you stop and attend to what is creating the impasse. You draw a line down the page and on one side you put all the forces that are supporting the change. On the other side you show all the forces that are resisting the change. Then in order to shift the status quo, you find ways of attending to the resistances in a way that would meet the underlying needs that are fuelling them. If you can honour and redirect the resistance, the change will happen without having to use greater effort.

Driving forces	Restraining forces
Staff want more support	Fear of being assessed
Enthusiasm of team leader	Paranoia about what the team leader's motives are
Team Leader is clear about his goals	Previous bad experience of supervision by some team members
'Time for me'	
Staff feel supervision may help Team Leader understand their problems better	Thinking that supervision is to do with failure
	Very time consuming

Figure 9: Force-field Analysis - Introducing Supervision

Shown above is an example of a force-field analysis of a situation in which a new team leader is trying to introduce supervision into a team where it has previously not existed.

In this situation an increase in the enthusiasm of the team leader about supervision or even his trying to convince team members about how good it would be for them would tend only to increase their paranoia about what he was trying to get them to do. Alternatively it might give them the sense that they really must be in a bad way for him to be so insistent that they need supervision. The wise team leader would instead look at ways of honouring and redirecting their resistances. Perhaps he would give them time to talk about their previous bad experiences of supervision or would engage them in planning the best and most time-efficient supervision system for this particular team.

In dealing with resistance it is also useful to realise that resistance often changes over time and can go through various stages Fink, Beak and Taddeo (Fink, Beak et al. 1971, 1971) postulate four phases through which groups or organisations will pass in response to change:

- Shock;
- Defensive retreat;
- Acknowledgement;
- Adaption and change.

In shock, interpersonal relations become fragmented, decision making becomes paralysed and communication confused. This leads to defensive retreat: individuals become self-protective, teams retreat into their own enclaves and become inward looking, decision making becomes more autocratic and communication more ritualised. In the acknowledgement phase individuals and teams begin to own that there are things that need changing and more support and confrontation are present.

When the fourth stage of adaption and change is reached, relations become more interdependent, there is more communication between individuals and across team boundaries, there is more willingness to explore and experiment with other ways of operating, and communication becomes more direct and open.

Thus it can be counter-productive to give people your marvellous scenarios for their future. They need to be involved in the thinking through and planning of the changes so that they have the opportunity to react, then understand the need for change and then adapt to the future necessities. It is very easy to think that because you have worked through the issues and come up with a good solution, other people need only to accept the rightness of the solution and do not need to go through the thinking process.

Step five: Develop New Policies and Approaches

Having carried out several experiments and overcome some of the resistance, it is important to capture the new approach in some form of policy and practice statement. This should include:

- Why the new approach is important and needed;
- What it is there to achieve;
- What success will look like;
- Who needs to be involved;
- When and where it is to be used;
- How it can be done;
- When it will be reviewed.

Step Six: Developing Training and On-going Learning and Development to Support the Changes.

Most approaches need to be supported by new learning for staff. This requires some form of training and development. This may be delivered in a mixture of ways:

- A training manual for the new way of working;
- On-line learning, including some form of interactive engagement;
- A short training course;
- A modular programme which includes a workshop followed by staff putting the learning into practice, supported by coaching (see the section on The Coaching Relationship) or supervision (see the section on Effective Models of Supervision).

Step Seven: An On-going Audit and Review Process

After 3, 6 or 12 months the organisation should undertake some form of review of its new approaches.

The review and audit should include:

- A quantitative survey of where and what and how much of the new approach is happening;
- Staff satisfaction and engagement with the quality of the new practices;
- An assessment of the impact of the new practices for service users;
- The number of staff that have undertaken training, and to what level;
- Illustrations of best practice within the organisation;
- Comparison to best practice in the profession.

The review should also assess whether the new approach has been built into:

a) Induction programmes.
b) Recruitment and promotion criteria.
c) Staff appraisals.
d) Job descriptions.
e) Staff competence frameworks.

f) General audits and reviews of practice.

Summary

As a SWAPP Manager you may need to carry out or be part of the following series of steps in aiding changes and improvements:

- Appreciate what is working well?
- Awakening interest in developing new approaches;
- Initiate some experiments;
- Deal with resistance to change;
- Develop new policies and approaches;
- Promote ongoing learning to support the changes;
- Establish an ongoing audit and review process.

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Enabling Your Own Professional Development

Acting as a SWAPP Manager will form part of your ongoing development. This section outlines the overall context within which this sits and describes a range of ways in which your development can progress. Your participation will also be an important part of encouraging a climate of development for others.

Within the UK, messages from both major reviews of social work and serious case reviews (Scottish Executive, 2006, DoE, 2010) have highlighted working conditions on the frontline of services in which poor communication and antagonistic relations between staff and managers served to work against the capacity of managers to lead and manage services. There is evidence that managers themselves can experience unmanageable workloads and expressed unmet needs for adequate support and continuing professional development (DCSF, 2009). This has merited giving further attention to developing a more coherent approach to leadership and management development.

In England, the Munro review of child protection (DoE, 2011) and the Social Work Reform Board (HM Government) both emphasised the particular importance of skilled and confident front line managers in terms of their essential contribution to practice. A range of approaches to supporting and developing aspiring, new in post and experienced front line managers have emerged and given particular emphasis on access to training and development in professional supervision (DoE, 2009; Bourn and Hafford-Letchfield, 2011). The National Skills Academy for Social Care (2009), the Leadership Group for the Children's Workforce (Hartle et al, 2009), the NHS Leadership Academy, a single comprehensive home for leadership, provide just a few examples of the public bodies charged with consulting on proposals designed to bring greater coherence to the development of middle management across an increasingly integrated workforce.

Within social work, how we actually develop, measure and evaluate our skills and their associated knowledge and values remains a relatively under- researched and under-documented area. More systematic evaluation of what constitutes effective management development has not yet been established.

Management for example is a very practical activity and managers use a range of knowledge and skills within their practice. Integrating these involves achieving synergy, balance and perspective through being aware of the social and political environment and being able to interact effectively whilst still adapting to changing pressures and opportunities.

The development of management skills and the acquisition of insight into ones self, others and the process of critical reflection on one's own learning is stimulated from a range of sources. Some approaches to management learning has been criticised for over- emphasising technical skills or by oversimplifying the social work management role (Hafford-Letchfield and Lawler, 2010). We have seen so far from the different sections in this document, that giving equal attention to the softer skills and being able to work confidently with complexity are equally important.

Developing a climate and culture for learning, in particular for management learning transfer is still developing in Children's Services. Within the management development process, any knowledge and skills taught should recognise that establishing collaborative relationships with business can provide an opportunity

to establish a powerful and influential lobby for social policy as well as helping with practice dilemmas. Given that all social workers manage, the Professional Capabilities Framework described earlier gives a clear message about the integration of professional leadership and organisational studies within its revised curriculum.

What do Managers Need to Learn?

An extensive review by Beinecke and Spencer (2007) identified five key areas of management learning:

1. Personal skills and knowledge (emotional intelligence, self-awareness, values and beliefs and ethical behaviours);
2. Interpersonal (people) skills (communication, teamwork, coaching, mentoring others, negotiating and facilitating, working with other cultures, stakeholders and empowering others);
3. Transactional (execution, business management) skills;
4. Transformational skills (visioning and strategic planning, catalysing change, innovation and goal setting);
5. Policy and program knowledge (policy, legislation and discipline expertise).

All of these may be given particular emphasis depending on the career trajectories of individual managers. Other areas of development that may be significant are the importance of ethics in management and being able to critically reflect in action as well as the capability to effectively implement evidence-based interventions. All of these developments imply a responsibility for one's own lifelong learning (Beinecke and Spencer, 2007).

Wimpfheimer (2004) has attempted to list some of the most desirable competencies that are specific to social work managers, such as:

- Knowledge of contemporary social policy through being well informed and ensuring that staff and service users benefit from their expert knowledge or act as a spokesperson through their network.
- The integral nature of advocacy, which represents both individuals and issues, advocacy involves inspiring people as telling the right story to the right people.
- Thinking about community and marketing relations within an ethical framework and acknowledging the unique context for marketing and promoting services which she sees as significantly unique in relation to other sectors.
- Understanding how an agency is governed an essential skill which involves being clear about the appropriate roles and responsibilities of people as well as being able to communicate them with clarity and diplomacy.
- Being good at planning by taking the lead and achieving a balance between the day to day operational needs and being able to see the bigger picture; strategic planning.
- Being able to lead and commit to change and take people with them and to develop a programme of work to support this.
- Financial and fiscal development and being able to manage these.
- Recognising the importance of evaluation and how to frame important questions and use the outcomes of evaluation to bring about service improvement. Wimpfheimer does not insist that managers necessarily have the skills of evaluation but should know how to use people and data, to make judgments about the quality of services and act on them.
- Human resource management which involves the softer skills and balancing individual needs with the well-being of the organization and its effectiveness. Managing people can be very challenging and managers need to be sensitive with good personal skills.
- Knowledge of staff development, an area frequently overlooked including skills in

resourcing this and selecting the right opportunities for staff to acquire the skills they need for the job.

Senge (1990) wrote that a 'learning organisation' values, and derives competitive advantage from, continuing learning, both individual and collective. He proposed that people put aside their old ways of thinking (mental models), learn to be open with others (personal mastery), understand how their organisation really works (systems thinking), form a plan everyone can agree on (shared vision), and then work together to achieve that vision (team learning).

Practical Tools for Management Development and Learning

The final part of this section talks about the practical ways in which managers might attend to or facilitate their development. Identifying and using resources for learning require managers to understand and use relationships within the workplace, a knowledge of the formal structure of the organisation and being aware of the constraints or limitations on the organisation as well as being able to capitalise on reciprocal relationships across its external and internal partnerships (Glisson et al, 2006).

Blumenthal (2003) emphasises the critical relationship between managerial capacity and organisational capacity when thinking about development. Blumenthal outlines four components that shape the design of effective management development which seeks to expand organisational capacity for learning:

1) Making explicit the organisational capacity-building goals;
2) Creating a supportive practice environment within the training program and in the agency;
3) Training approaches that include multiple

approaches to learning, e.g. didactic, experiential, reflective, self-assessing, and life-long learning; and,
4) The use of different training tools such as self-assessment, blended learning, and observational methods.

We have also drawn on Tourism and Pinnington (2010) conceptualisation of seven main forms of leadership and management development based on their experiences of running tailored programmes in Scotland. Their headings could be used to discuss potential development initiatives for managers as they draw on a range of opportunities both formal and informal learning including:

Formal credited programmes and courses - These may be externally or internally provided and entail staff attending formally organised learning', off-the-job'. These may also be uni or multi-professional. This can be a challenge where there are limited resources and competition for training that carries qualifications and how these will benefit the organisation as well as the individual, as well as the relationship between both of these outcomes for improving the service.

Multi-source feedback - This describes a variety of methods used to obtain, reflect and build on feedback obtained from individuals within a manager's circle of direct influence and readily lends itself to blending business know-how with social work values. This approach provides opportunities to build a more collaborative culture that is participatory in nature. Multi-source feedback tools such as 360 degree programmes can also be expensive in their design as well as in the time invested in the process. An example of such a tool that you could quickly adapt to use in your local team can be found via the following link http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/book/9781849052061/resources/

Coaching and mentoring - This is now a very common method of learning in most management development settings. It can be focused on achieving a specific goal or improvement you want to achieve through very practical means. Coaching and mentoring is a very individual, one-to-one approach which can be used to promote both psychosocial and career functions. Where mentoring and coaching is used it is recommended that there is a structured training programme for mentors and coaches as well as those utilising their skills and knowledge (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2008).

Networking - Seeks to foster wider individual networks, create a greater business literacy and more in-depth organisational knowledge across multi-agency and inter-professional settings particularly around service development and quality issues. Networking also has a social element which builds relationships between people around a common area or community of knowledge. These networks might be referred to as a 'Community of practice', a relatively underdeveloped theory on learning.

Communities of practice - Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Developing communities for example around a specialist area in children's services requires minimal facilitation and encourages individuals to take responsibility for their work, reporting back to the team leader, keeping them briefed on progress or consulting on significant problems - but otherwise working independently. They can be aligned around social events such as lunch time journal clubs or through a web-based tool which encourages sharing of information and other resources.

Job or project management assignments – As underpinning features of SWAPP, these provide managers with a challenge in which they have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills by taking up new roles, tasks and responsibilities alongside opportunities to develop specific technical skills and knowledge specific to the project they are working on.

Action learning - This assumes that managers learn most by getting things done and working on real problems. An action learning set normally consists of a group of people with different or similar backgrounds, positions in the organisation and work experience. Its purpose is through use of reflective questioning techniques; the holder of the problem can create and implement innovative solutions to complex problems. The development goal for participants is to reflect and learn from both their own actions and those of others.

The above methods of learning and development activities are by no means exhaustible but serve to give a flavour of how learning and development activities can take place within a framework aligned with organisational goals and objectives. They can also be utilised to facilitate innovative responses to working through the 'wicked' issues. A blended approach enables self-directed and autonomous learning although the latter poses challenges as managers may need to explore whether their perceived learning needs and desired outcomes are in harmony and whether their preferred approaches to learning coincide.

Autonomy is not merely the ability to direct one's own learning; it takes into account emotional, intellectual, and moral dimensions. Part of the process involves the ability to conceive of yourself as a continuous learner and to develop the motivation and aptitude to manage your own learning as well as making informed judgements about which learning strategies are best suited to you at any one time.

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) is one tool you can use to elaborate the specific areas that you wish to develop throughout your ongoing social work career. The PCF is an interactive tool and its domains and outcomes can be aligned to the range of development needs within an organisation and help to align learning with where the organisation wants to get to. The framework below offers another way of putting together a unique mix of learning opportunities, qualifications and organisational training for an individual team or agency.

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Hafford-Letchfield, T., Lawler, J. (2010) Guest Editorial. Reshaping leadership and management: The emperor's new clothes? Social Work & Social Sciences Review, Vol 14, no 1, pp. 5 – 8.Hartle et al

Identify development needs to perform your job role from sources such as:	Develop a Personal Development Plan which could include discrete learning opportunities which are:	Relevant CPD tools and activities for demonstrating outcomes;
• Job description • Person Specification • Levels of outcomes of the PCF • Generic leadership and management standards • Partnership requirements • New legislation, policies or service initiatives • SWAPP	• Organisation specific for updating and developing services • External to the organisation • Required qualifications essential to the role and which match the PCF outcomes • Any induction to new roles or services	• Record of learning • Reflective learning diary • Evidence of how standards are being met through learning activities • Evaluation or learning within supervision and appraisal records

Figure 10: Developmental Framework

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The Coaching Relationship
What is 'coaching'?

Coaching is the focused application of skills that deliver performance improvement to the individual's work in his or her organisation, through robust support and challenge. The coaching process should yield learning and personal development for the executive, and help them to contribute more of their potential. This collaborative relationship will be short-term and practically focused, and will be marked by clear, strong feedback. (Hawkins and Smith 2013)

The key outcomes that distinguish coaching seem to be the facilitation of:

• Performance improvement – and therefore it is goal focused, results oriented and practical;
• Adult learning;
• Personal development / support / and unlocking of personal potential.

The activities that deliver these outcomes arise from a working relationship with an individual that:

• Generates a collaborative partnership;
• Allows clear, unvarnished feedback;
• Has a short-term and practical focus.

In this respect, coaching at work is similar to 'sports coaching', which also focuses upon performance improvement, personal development and unlocking the individual's potential.

The social work manager can usefully use a coaching approach and skills in their managing of their direct reports, but there may be a time when a worker needs more independent coaching from a specialist coach (Hawkins 2012 see Manager as Coach).

The most important aspect of any coaching conversation, is one in which the coach is not trying to solve the problem for the person they are coaching, but instead is facilitating a process where the other person can through inquiry, discover a better way of handling their work challenges and by so doing grow their capability, capacity and confidence.

Types of Coaching

Building on earlier work by Witherspoon (2000), Hawkins and Smith (2013) propose a continuum of coaching that distinguishes four types of coaching, by their main focus. This is shown in figure 1 below.

At one end of the continuum there is a focus on developing new skills in the coachee. These could be specific skills related to their role or job, such as sales skills, IT skills etc, or more general people management skills; how to appraise staff, or give and receive feedback. A lot of this sort of coaching would be offered in training courses.

Performance coaching is less focused on the acquisition of skills (inputs) and more centred on raising the coachee's level of performance (outputs and outcomes) in their current role. This is the sort of coaching typically offered by a manager or internal coach.

Development coaching is less focused on the current role and more centred on the coachee's longer term development and thus has some aspects of mentoring. Besides
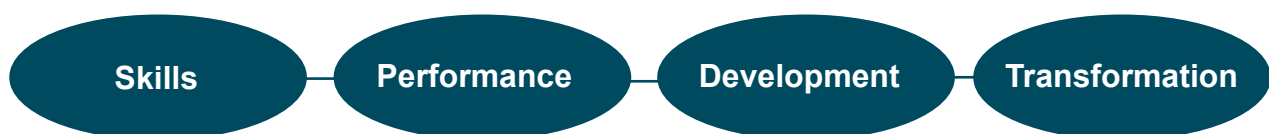
Skills — Performance — Development — Transformation

Figure 11: The Coaching Continuum

helping the coachee develop competencies and capabilities, it will include more focus on the development of the whole person and their human capacities and how they can use their current role to develop their capacity for future roles and challenges. Thus there is more focus on second order or double loop learning (Argyris 1978, Hawkins 1991), which focuses even more on second order learning and change. Whereas development learning will tend to focus on increasing the coachee's capacity within one level of life stage and action logic or mental world view, transformation will be more involved with enabling the coachee to shift levels and transition from one level of functioning to a higher order level.

Coaching also uses the CLEAR model that was outlined in the section on supervision. This is described in the coaching context in Hawkins and Smith 2013 as shown below.

There are a number of other very useful models of coaching phases that have been generated over recent years which usefully sit alongside the CLEAR model. The most widely used was developed by Graham Alexander and Sir John Whitmore (1992 and 1996) and is known as the GROW model.

GROW model (Whitmore 2002):

- GOAL setting for the session as well as short and long term;
- REALITY checking to explore the current situation;
- OPTIONS and alternative strategies or courses of action;
- WHAT is to be done, WHEN by WHOM and the WILL to do it.

Contract	Supervision sessions start with establishing the client's desired outcomes, understanding what needs to be covered and how the supervisor and the supervisory process can be most valuable. They will also agree any basic ground rules and roles.
Listen	By using active listening and inquiry interventions the supervisor helps the supervisee to develop an understanding of the situation in which they want to effect a difference. The supervisor needs to let the supervisee know how they understand and feel what it is like to be in their shoes. In addition the supervisor can help the supervisee hear themselves more fully, through reframing and making new connections in what has been shared.
Explore	Through questioning, reflection and the generation of new insight and awareness, supervisors work with the supervisee to create different options for handling the relationship with their client or issue that arise in the work.
Action	Having explored the various dynamics within the situation and developed various options for handling it, the supervisee chooses a way forward and agrees the first steps. At this point it can be useful to do a "fast-forward rehearsal", to enact the future first step live in the room.
Review	Reviewing the actions that have been agreed. The supervisor also encourages feedback from the supervisee on what was helpful about the supervision process, what was difficult and what they would like to be different in future supervision sessions. Agreeing how the planned action will be reviewed at future supervision sessions completes the work.

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Creating Reflective Space for the Secondee

As a SWAPP Manager you will be endeavouring to assimilate a great deal of information in a short space of time and to make sense of it. This requires a process of reflection in order to fully understand what you have observed and what you might do with what you have found out. You need to make time for this in a way which enables you to concentrate on it to gain the full benefit from your endeavours.

One of the most useful things you can do when seconded to another organisation is to keep a journal. This will enable you to record your reactions to what you are experiencing and thus provide some information to aid your personal reflection. You should be making a note of **why** you think something is happening in a particular manner and not just **what** is happening. If you don't understand **why** something is happening you might be trying to change something in isolation without considering all of the factors. Make sure you compare your notes across different days, different weeks, and most importantly different people. The reflections you record may not just be about the organisation you have been seconded into but also about your host organisation, and indeed your own personal style and approach.

As a social work professional you should be used to the concept of reflective practice. You may be familiar with reflection-in-action and reflection on action as separately identified by Donald Schön in The Reflective Practitioner. If you use these in a social work setting you will know how you use your repertoire of images, metaphors and theories to guide and amend what you do while you are doing it (reflection-in-action or thinking on your feet in common parlance). This is developed in more detail in the section on Managing High Quality Social Work Practice.

Although you may be using your familiar observational skills, when looking at another organisation you will not necessarily have the storehouse of information to make fully rounded judgements while you are observing. In this context reflection on action becomes more important, taking the time to fully assimilate what you have experienced, testing it out in your own mind and in discussion with others.

Opportunities should be created for you to reflect about your experiences as a secondee within the supervision and appraisal system within your host organisation. In particular this may help you to gain a fuller perspective of the progress being made. Experience within the consultancy field would suggest that progress never happens as quickly as you think it should and it is often a question of using suitable opportunities to move things forward. Being in the right place at the right time, seeing the opportunity and making the right move can be of significance.

It may also help for you to network with those in neighbouring or like-minded authorities who are in the same position so you can compare your reflections. The region in which you are located may have a process to facilitate that. The chances are though that all SWAPP managers will not all be of the same mind as each organisation will be in a different place in terms of their development, as well as having differences because of the area they are in.

Organisations do move both forwards and backwards in terms of their development, those who were at the forefront of practice may not be so now. The people involved will have changed and their experiences and backgrounds will be different. You may need to reflect on which authorities appear to be further forward in their development and on what aspects. It may be that some are better at some aspects and others at others. The

precise mix of the situation may have overall consequences for how those particular authorities might move forward.

To help you gain the most benefit from being involved in SWAPP you may need to find someone who can provide you with coaching. This may be particularly helpful if you are both developing your personal style as well as helping you to improve the way in which another organisation works. A coach could help with your reflective processes on what you've experienced as well as looking forward to how you might make use of what you've learnt for both your own benefit and that of the organisations concerned. The previous section on The Coaching Relationship may help you in this regard.

Summary

In observing another organisation and helping it to improve you will need to:

• Record what you are observing and why it occurs so you can reflect on it later;
• Take time out for reflection to gain a well-rounded view of practice in the organisation you have been seconded to;
• Discuss your reflections with appropriate others, but don't expect to agree with everyone;
• Make use of your reflections in your own personal development and consider having some coaching to gain the full benefits from SWAPP.

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Effective Models of Supervision

This section discusses different models of supervision and suggests a framework aimed at maximising the effectiveness of the process.

What is Supervision

Supervision is a joint endeavour in which a practitioner with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships and the wider systemic context, and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession. (Hawkins and Shohet 2012)

To better understand this definition we can look at each phrase separately:

Supervision is a joint endeavour – It is important that supervision is not seen as an activity done by the supervisor on the supervisee. Both the supervisee and the supervisor need to be working in partnership, standing shoulder to shoulder in facing the challenges of the work, within a clear contract, in service of the supervisee and the wider system

in which a practitioner with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients,- Supervision always involves clients, (otherwise it becomes a form of counselling at work), it provides the opportunity for the supervisee to stand back and reflect on each of their clients so as to understand the clients better and what might best help them.

themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships – We believe that an objective understanding of the client is neither achievable nor desirable but the practitioner needs to understand the client in the context of the their professional relationship, which entails reflecting on themselves as part of the relational context and the wider systemic context, - the relationships with the clients never exist in isolation, but always in a systemic context, which includes the organisational and professional context, the wider social, cultural and political context in which the organisation operates, as well as the family and social context of the client (see Hawkins 2011c) - *and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession.*

Supervision is not just a reflective process but one that needs to produce learning and improvement outcomes for the supervisee, their clients, their future practice, the organisation and the profession. It is important that supervision is not just a process where the more senior members of a profession develop more junior members in how the organisation and profession currently operate but supervision should also be a source of organisational and professional learning.

At a minimum supervision should be in service of:

• The learning and development of the supervisee;
• The clients of the supervisee and the quality of service they receive;
• The organisation(s) that employ the supervisee and the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation's work;
• The on-going learning and development of the profession in which the supervisee, and possibly, the supervisor work.

Done well, we believe that supervision can and should serve four or more purposes.

Functions of Supervision

Kadushin (1977), writing about social work supervision, describes three main functions or roles, which he terms as educative, supportive and managerial.

Proctor (1988) makes a similar distinction in describing the main processes in the supervision of counselling, for which she uses the terms formative, restorative and normative.

- Look at how they intervened and the consequences of their interventions;
- Explore other ways of working with this and other similar client situations.

The resourcing function is a way of responding to how any workers who are engaged in personal work with clients are necessarily allowing themselves to be affected by the distress, pain and fragmentation of the client and how they

Hawkins and Smith	Proctor	Kadushin
Developmental	*Formative*	*Educational*
Resourcing	*Restorative*	*Supportive*
Qualitative	*Normative*	*Managerial*

Figure 12: Functions of Supervision

Hawkins and Smith (2013) writing about coaching supervision, describe the three main functions as developmental, resourcing and qualitative. Kadushin's functions focuses on the role of the supervisor, Proctor on the supervisee benefit, whereas Hawkins and Smith on the process that both supervisor and supervisee are engaged in. We show the three together in the table above.

The developmental function which is the one stressed in all the definitions quoted above, is about developing the skills, understanding and capacities of the supervisees. This is carried out through the reflection on and exploration of the supervisees' work with their clients. In this exploration they may be helped to:

- Understand the client better;
- Become more aware of their own reactions and responses to the client;
- Understand the dynamics of the interactions between themselves and their clients;

need time to become aware of how this has affected them and to deal with any reactions. This is essential if workers are not to become over full of emotions. These emotions may have been produced through empathy with or re-stimulated by the client, or be a reaction to the client. Not attending to these emotions soon leads to less than effective workers, who become either over-identified with their clients or defended against being further affected by them. This in time leads to stress and what is now commonly called *burn out*. The British miners in the 1920s fought for what was termed *pit-head time* the right to wash off the grime of the work in the boss's time, rather than take it home with them. Supervision is the equivalent for those that work at the coal-face of personal distress, disease and fragmentation.

The qualitative aspect of supervision provides the quality control function in work with people. It is not only lack of training or experience that necessitates the need in us, as workers, to have someone look with us at

our work, but our inevitable human failings, blind spots, areas of vulnerability from our own wounds and our own prejudices. In many settings the supervisor may carry some responsibility for the welfare of the clients and how the supervisee is working with them. Supervisors may carry the responsibility to ensure that the standards of the agency in which the work is being carried out are upheld. Nearly all supervisors, even when they are not line managers, have some responsibility to ensure that the work of their supervisee is appropriate and falls within defined ethical and professional standards.

Davys and Bedoe (2010) add a fourth supervision function, that of mediation, pointing out that the supervisor may have to mediate between the supervisee, the organisation they work for, their training body or a range of other stakeholders.

Process of Supervision: CLEAR Supervision Model

This model, first developed by Peter Hawkins in 1980 (Hawkins and Shohet 1989 and 2012), helps the supervisor structure a good supervision session. A more advanced model also developed by Peter Hawkins is the Seven-eyed model of supervision (Hawkins and Shohet 2013) and used in social work in many countries in the world.

Useful questions and responses for each stage of the model. These are examples of questions and interventions that have been found to be useful in helping others to explore a situation more deeply.

1. Contracting: Starting with the end in mind and agreeing how you are going to get there together:

Contract	Supervision sessions start with establishing the client's desired outcomes, understanding what needs to be covered and how the supervisor and the supervisory process can be most valuable. They will also agree any basic ground rules and roles.
Listen	By using active listening and inquiry interventions the supervisor helps the supervisee to develop an understanding of the situation in which they want to effect a difference. The supervisor needs to let the supervisee know how they understand and feel what it is like to be in their shoes. In addition the supervisor can help the supervisee hear themselves more fully, through reframing and making new connections in what has been shared.
Explore	Through questioning, reflection and the generation of new insight and awareness, supervisors work with the supervisee to create different options for handling the relationship with their client or issue that arise in the work.
Action	Having explored the various dynamics within the situation and developed various options for handling it, the supervisee chooses a way forward and agrees the first steps. At this point it can be useful to do a "fast-forward rehearsal", to enact the future first step live in the room.
Review	Reviewing the actions that have been agreed. The supervisor also encourages feedback from the supervisee on what was helpful about the supervision process, what was difficult and what they would like to be different in future supervision sessions. Agreeing how the planned action will be reviewed at future supervision sessions completes the work.

Figure 13: CLEAR Supervision Model

- How do you want to use your time?
- What do you most need to achieve in this session?
- How could I be most valuable to you?
- What in particular do you want us to focus on?
- What challenges are you facing?

2. Listening: Facilitating the supervisee in generating personal insight into the situation:

Can you say more about that?

- Are there any people involved that you have not mentioned?
- How do other people - your boss, your colleagues, your team - see the situation?
- Let us see if I can summarise the issue.

3. Exploring 1: Helping the supervisee to understand the personal impact of the situation:

- How are you feeling right now?
- Are there any feelings that you have not expressed?
- Does this person remind you of anyone? What is it you would like to say to that person?
- •What pattern might you be repeating in this situation?

3. Exploring 2: Challenging the supervisee to create new possibilities for future action in resolving the situation:

- What outcomes do you and others want?
- What behaviours need to be different in you or your team members to achieve the outcome?
- Who might be of help to you that you have not yet consulted?
- Can you think of four different ways of tackling this situation?

4. Action: Supporting the supervisee in committing to a way ahead and creating the next step:

- What are the pros and cons of each possible strategy?
- What is your long-term objective?
- What is the first step you need to take?
- When precisely are you going to do that?
- Is your plan realistic? What is the percentage chance of your succeeding?
- Can you show me the opening line you are going to use in your next session?

5. Review: Taking stock and reinforcing ground covered and commitments made. Reviewing the process and how it could be improved. Planning the future review after the action has been tried:

- What have you decided to do next?
- What have you learned from this session?
- In what ways have you increased your own ability to handle similar situations?
- What did you find helpful about this supervision process?
- What could be better next time in this supervision process?

5. Review 2: Debriefing at the next session the actions taken between sessions:

- How did what you planned work out?
- How do you think you did?
- What feedback did you receive?
- What did you do well and what could have been even better?
- What can you learn from what happened?

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Using Information Systems to Support Improvement, Learning and Outcomes

Overview

The Munro Review 2011 made the following comment:

A lot of data is collected (some required nationally and some developed locally) which is said to describe performance, but in many cases it does not describe what matters and it consumes a disproportionate amount of time and resource.

The data which ought to be being collected should answer the following two questions:

1. How well are the service users doing?
2. How well are we the service providers helping them?

Almost all authorities in England use compliant Integrated Children's Recording System (ICS) for recording Child Protection and Looked After Services. These applications provide the necessary data for formal statutory reports in child protection and children's social care. They typically also provide a degree of freedom about what else is recorded. Information can be created from the data in these systems that can be related to the above two questions but probably illustrates neither well.

With regard to answering these two questions the data itself is likely to be limited and incomplete and hence the information created from it only paints a partial picture. So having been designed as ICS process based systems there may be lots of information about throughput and output activity, but little about practice

thinking and outcomes. Consequently it is probably also true to say that there will be little useful information about understanding the child's journey and what was offered to help and what made a difference. Moreover, the overall context of use of information and managing the service may be oriented to process compliance rather than service improvement. In addition, these systems do not usually cover work done in universal services and typically are not integrated with multi-agency systems or early help and prevention arrangements such as common assessment.

The temptation is to focus on a limited set of reporting requirements and to organise data in such a way as to enable this counting to take place. This is a problem because of the tendency is to count administrative activity which is well defined and data about process which can be easily completed and collected in a single agency. But this is not what is really needed to guide policy, strategy, decision making and behaviour. Whilst there is a need to know whether resources are being used efficiently and effectively, without a bigger picture of how this makes a difference we will not actually know whether this represents value for money. We may also not actually be measuring what the service is here for i.e. to safeguard and facilitate the wellbeing of children.

Given the above the challenge is three-fold:

1. How can data about practice and outcomes be collected and recorded to provide information about service impact and outcomes?

2. How can facts, observations, interpretations, and judgements be captured to describe the journeys of individual children and the benefits which children and families receive, bearing in mind this data is held by a range of agencies and professionals?

3. How can information management, information technology and information systems be best utilised to support organisational development and learning and hence facilitate and promote service improvement?

Earlier in this document it was recognised that providing social work services to children and their families is a complex and interconnected business. It consists of messes and difficulties that often do not have neat and tidy responses, which can be ticked off. Yet everyone involved with safeguarding and child care services can point to much effective work which benefits families and children using services. The issue therefore becomes how to harness this know how and knowledge utilising information systems without oversimplification and inappropriate reduced response to the situation.

The following sections provide an outline pathway through this challenge. They do not provide all the answers since these will only emerge through further consideration by those providing social work and related services. They do outline what needs to be considered and what should be taken into account in following this particular journey, and the part which SWAPP managers can play in this process. Much like the work with children and families, we know what the starting point is and we may have some notion of what an improved state of affairs might look like, but we don't know specifically what it will be. It will emerge through the work that everyone is now embarking upon.

The Role of the SWAPP Manager in Using Information Systems

This section looks at how SWAPP managers should approach gaining the data and information they need to assist in developing and improving safeguarding services.

Enabling Access to Systems

The SWAPP manager may not be familiar with the particular information system in the local authority they are seconded to. They will need rapid introduction into the relevant case management systems. This will include how to access individual case information as well as extracting management information and reports. These systems will typically be configured for day to day operational work and the SWAPP role may require a different login profile to achieve reporting and data extracts. Should there be systems covering early help and prevention and any other front door related work areas, they will also need access to these.

Ideally the SWAPP manager will need to develop a partnership with centralised support and not be limited to reports that need to be constructed by a data technician. They will need to be able to use and modify standard reports, and also to access relevant data on demand that they can filter, sort and/or extract/download to relevant data tables. Failure to set up, communicate and support all of the above in advance will lead to frustration and may hinder the progress of the SWAPP.

Observing What is Recorded, What is Not and Why

Although you may think everyone records things in the same way and collects the same data, as a SWAPP Manager you will need to check carefully what is and isn't considered significant, captured and recorded. Detailed differences may give clues about the way in which cases are managed, or the culture of the organisation, which when put alongside other information may lead to possible suggestions for improvement.

The following may be useful pointers for you to consider:

- Can you easily access information starting with a particular child or family? How do you trace the journey of the child and see the decision making leading to particular activity? If there is incomplete data and someone's name has changed how is this handled, what happens to the quality and completeness of information?
- If you access information using age or date of birth (the latter is preferable) would it give you links to other related siblings? Would it also give you access to changes in the household members?
- How is ethnicity or cultural origin recorded across different systems and what does this tell you about understanding the individual?
- When considering analysis by input, process, output, or outcome does this have to be done separately? How do reports show practice thinking and outcome information linked to input and process?
- How is involvement with other agencies recorded? Is it when it is supplied by them in electronic form or is it collated in some way and re-input by others? Are social work staff involved in interpretation?
- Are outcomes and feedback recorded or merely end dates of interventions? What follow up activities exist in respect of the latter?
- Frequency counts are often a useful way to compare categories across inputs, process, outputs and outcomes. How easily can these be produced?

Remember that the process of analysing any tables of data you generate as part of

your enquiries is not an instant one. You may need to scan data several times before items of significance occur to you. This process has some similarities to the 'Magic Eye' image process where in time the brain can suddenly distinguish significant patterns from noise. Through studying what you have found you will be able to pose questions about whether practice is helpful or less helpful and whether there are appropriate interactions taking place both within and between organisations.

You will need to distinguish between those things that occur because of the particular IT system in use, and those things, which are driven by management or staff. It is not the intention for you to review IT systems but you might need to point out what needs further in depth study. This will especially be true if the needs of the system are driving professional practice rather than the needs of professional practice driving the system.

Identifying What's missing, What Would it Help a Front Line Manager to Know?

One aspect that is of high importance is how front line managers get the data and information and support for accurate interpretation that is needed to carry out their role. With increasing demands being placed on front line resources through either expenditure cuts or a higher number of referrals, are there any critical issues, which need to be addressed. The following questions may assist you with this:

- Can you easily access basic case information such as the current circumstances and the story of the child?
- Is reliable information accessible and available to assess risk or review whether or not cases should continue, or whether the family is engaged with a suitable support package and is this flexible enough to meet needs or should be amended?
- Is data captured about the thinking behind

pieces of work or interventions offered?
- What is captured about work done and feedback which illustrate outcomes and the key steps that lead to these?
- How easy is it to access household, family and other relationship details. Is it easy to understand help offered to the whole family as well as responses to individual sibling needs? Can you see the changes in the household members?
- How easily can you track the journey of the child through one or more service
- How is involvement with other agencies recorded? Is it when it is supplied by them in electronic form or is it collated in some way and re-input by others? Are social work staff involved in interpretation?
- Are outcomes and feedback recorded or merely outputs and end dates of interventions? What follow up activities exist in respect of the latter?
- Frequency counts are often a useful way to compare information across inputs, process, outputs and outcomes. How easily can these be produced?

This might then indicate the need for adjustments in the way in which things are done. The next section includes an inquiry framework which may help with this.

It may be very helpful to read a sample of case files and possibly organise a group of people to do this. This can provide some feedback about incomplete data as well as understanding the variation in where important practice thinking and case stories are being stored in the information system. It can also provide an opportunity to discuss what data and categories are or might be improvement to include in an evaluation framework. In a busy work area it may be harder to organise this kind of exercise but if improvements are to be identified and made there needs to be time set aside for reflection. This must involve front line staff and supervisors in order to ensure ownership of any adjustments or changes in approach.

Helping Others to Understand the Situation Regarding Data and Information

There will be data drawn together to provide senior management with an indication about the overall work performance of safeguarding and child care. This will then be used to generate information, what needs to be considered is whether it properly reflects the reality of what is happening. All too often data can be used inappropriately and hence may not show what it purports to measure. This may particularly be the case where reassurance is being looked for, by senior management, elected representatives or other interested parties, to show that something is happening. This could illustrate where information management is being used for defensive purposes and indicates that work is needed to enable an organisation wide focus on learning and improvement.

As was said earlier, ways will need to be found to record outcomes and aspects of the child's journey as well as counting work throughput. These are key challenges and are unlikely to be resolved quickly, especially if cross comparison with other organisations is looked for. It may be that richer, more descriptive and contextual qualitative information needs to be provided rather than quantitative process data.

As an outsider you may be able to help everyone look at what they are doing afresh and hence begin a conversation about doing things differently. What may need to be done is discussed further in the following sections.

Linking with IT Systems Staff and External Providers.

An important part of moving IT systems forward will be to develop and share new ways of thinking which this SWAPP document illustrates. Whilst this needs to be a developmental dialogue between social work, related professionals and their leaders, there is also a need to involve managers able to lead information management and information technology design and the provision of systems and support services. They need to positively appreciate the latest practice and service thinking and analyse needs carefully in order to make appropriate input about what technology and technical aspects, which fit best with this.

Unfortunately, technical approaches are too often based on existing project, task or initiative based solutions and the significant and challenging dialogue work which captures qualitative aspects of service user interactions is incomplete. Internal and external IT staff can lack familiarity with children's service practice, the complex nature of social work and the ill defined challenges being faced. This can lead to inadvertent selection of solutions which are found to be fixed, overly focused on well defined activity and unable to support the practice context depth as well as changes.

More importantly many supplier product solutions do not yet offer the necessary flexibility versus cost, scope and mix of technology to support practice and organisational improvement in relation to the messes and difficulties as described in the chapter on Managing Complexity.

Summary

SWAPP Managers will need to:

- Identify the data and information they need;
- Observe what is recorded, what is not and why;
- Identify what's missing, what would it help a frontline manager to know;
- Help others to understand the situation in respect of data and information;
- Link with IT systems staff/external providers.

Influencing How Systems Need to be Adapted and Changed

This section considers how to move forward and develop the data and information systems needed for service improvement.

Appreciation as a Filtering Device

Understanding how information is created from data and is filtered by people from knowledge, experience and different cognitive viewpoints is an essential prerequisite before considering what performance and what improvement we need to create information about. Lewis (1994) argues that there is data which is filtered out and not recognised or recorded. This may be different for different individuals or interest groups. The result is that the use of information system for recording representative data can already be deficient before considering what system reporting can tell us about whether a service is functioning effectively or not.
In this regard Munro (2010) states:

> …. previous reforms have concentrated too much on the explicit, logical aspects of reasoning and this has contributed to a skewed management framework that undervalues intuitive reasoning and emotions and thus fails to give appropriate support to those aspects.

Elsewhere in this reference guide we have aimed to illustrate how assumptions and structures that presume efficient and effective working can often be found to limit learning and exploration of deeper system inter-relationships which can lead to achieving higher performance. Particularly because of the ubiquitous taken for granted nature of information systems and the commissioning structures around these, it can be easy to overlook where

the information system design is not fit for purpose or alternatively to adopt a very low expectation of this.

The purpose of an information system in Children's Services could be defined as: Enabling the worker to build a whole understanding of the child's experience and circumstances, to help access the widest possible knowledge and experience of practice, to support timely and skilled intervention, to influence and support how teams and resources are configured to make a difference to the child's journey and outcomes.

The implication of the above is that the SWAPP process provides an opportunity for more proactive use of information systems and to experiment with capturing and embedding suitable data to investigate and report on outcomes and their improvement. However, such initiatives will exist in silos and wither and die without wider organisational actions to make the necessary management connections and to do work on the bigger picture arrangements across multi-agency and multi-professional service groups. This may also mean radically and coherently changing or replacing existing information systems.

Evaluating Pathways and Outcomes

A useful enquiry framework which the author has applied to Children's Services reporting and information analysis projects. The framework which is illustrated below is typically applied to a whole service area such as initial contact, referral to social care and referral to looked after services. It is a guide to creating a rich picture framework of social work practice. Rich pictures are used in Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland 1999). They are part of the understanding process and critically accept different views of the same situation from different participants in order to develop more effective responses.

INPUT – Data and observations about where the service journey begins and what we understood about what was happening before this.

In addition to individual data such as age, gender etc, you will need data to cover what is understood about incoming activity, what date and time, source, route, previous contact and status with agencies, and what factors led to the 'referral'. These might include carer stressors, protective factors, drugs, alcohol, harm or injury etc. In addition the story of the initial response to the incoming activity will need to be recorded, typically captured in text fields. Ideally both rich categories and narrative about practice should be captured. This enables using the database to find and compare similarities or differences in records easily. However, this process is not fixed as reading and reflecting on narratives will generate new insights and further significant categories.

PROCESS – Both Visible and Invisible – What we thought about, what action we took. These data cover key stages, events and dates assessment and how assessed, service type category and reasons, who is involved in key decisions, what service is offered and what fit with needs, assessment and/or prognosis etc. In addition to capture the story of the work and the decision-making typically captured in text fields. The narrative can contain invisible process i.e. the thinking of those involved.

OUTPUT – The changes and results around our actions.

These data cover key events, dates, work done and service type and status at end, reason for decision-making, who invited and attended key meetings, and could include changes in risk levels and the need for interventions i.e. child protection status or court action. A particularly useful visualisation for 'looked after children' is the Leaving Care Curve (Thorpe, Denman and Regan 2011), which can be constructed from start and end date of the substantive care episode.

OUTCOMES – The differences we observed and feedback about what impact we made.

These can include engagement and take up of service against population and other behavioural profiles, how the child and family and other individuals (including worker and referrer) viewed the work, decision making, progress and results and destinations including changes in stressors, protective factors, drug/alcohol use, patterns of parenting, attendance at school etc. and in addition a story of the outcomes included in the text. How did we understand the work undertaken helped the child and improved their situation and life chances? How did we understand and respond to the views of the child and family members?

Data Reporting and Extraction Tips

You will typically use data about people e.g. Age, Gender, Ethnicity etc. and this should be easy to include in any report. We recommend you also include individual and family unique identifiers or IDs as this can allow data to be joined together later DoB will always be preferably to Age as Age-

Figure 14: Creating a Rich Picture of Social Work Practice

range e.g. 10-14 and Years Months 11y3m can be easily derived by calculation from DoB at any significant date. This can be done either in the report or later in an analysis tool. Ethnicity and Nationality Categories can vary from practice and typically will have been constructed for centralised or national returns. Note: education and children services categories may be expressed differently. Wherever possible it is usually desirable to access the most granular data, categories that are most descriptive as well as key text. Inevitably, you will select a consistent but limited set of data fields where you will miss some of the stories recorded elsewhere, however, you may be able to improve upon this later.

You may also find you need to use more than one report or data extract to investigate data to cover the whole of Input, Process, Output and Outcome e.g. what services offered and taken up. As necessary these can be joined and/or collated together later with some basic technical help.

At each stage it can be useful to collect a range of key dates, for example to distinguish first contact date from referral date, attempted engagement date, from actual engagement. Reporting on Dates will be preferable as Year, Month, Week etc. can also be calculated from any date. We suggest you include blank dates i.e. where a process is current, there will be no end date and current status can be derived from this. Where people, teams and responsible agency is involved it is preferable to use a unique identifier ID as well as Name and Team so that other links such as manager, service owner and new team can be linked later. It is usually always preferable to include granular data such as details of previous episodes and to avoid using Yes/No status flags. Flags may become unreliable as subsequent reports may include retrospective update of records of these events acquired over time.

Outcome recording will require a further necessary investment of time in order to capture and validate rich information about impact and outcomes happening over time. This may involve rituals to keep in touch with young adults such as birthday cards, text and email etc. e.g. to find out whether relationship and contacts have grown and been sustained, a college course or employment etc.

Typically, rich data captured can be assembled into a standard report (for example based on a time period for the start or end of intervention in a service area) and presented as rows and columns in a table as shown below. This can then be sorted and filtered etc. and evaluated by scanning for patterns and comparisons which may be expected, surprising and/or potentially significant and raise questions about what worked in the service.

	Count	%
Dropped Out	3	3.56%
Fully Completed	25	34.31%
Part Completed	2	2.58%
Ongoing	49	59.55%
Grand Total	79	100.00%

Figure 15: Sample Data Table

However, it can be helpful if reporting tools can easily create groupings such as age ranges to make comparison easier. Ideally, to make it easy to create frequency counts and cross-tabulations (also referred to in software tools as pivot tables).

The frequency count is a particularly useful way to explore patterns by viewing comparisons of numbers and percentage.

Ideally the reporting tool enables data drill down (moving from summary data to specific detail) under any number in the grouping, for example, to quickly see other aspects of rich

data such as work offered, age and gender or view the categories and or the narrative of the story of engagement associated with 'Part Completed'.

The data from the proposed evaluation framework may be used to investigate different practices, build evidence and create a detailed aggregate picture to discover how different services, teams, and professionals apply process, and use their experience and judgement to do the work. The aggregate picture can also raise questions about what structures inform activity, thinking and decision-making throughout a family and /or child's journey interacting with a service. In this regard it is particularly important to retain stories in key text in the aggregate data set which can be read at any point to help clarify the context of practice, thinking and decisions.

Where, changes have been made to categories or fields on data capture forms you may need to explicitly arrange for this data to be included in reports and this may require technical input and/or support. This will need to be promptly scheduled as part of SWAPP.

In addition to seeking necessary approval you will need to allow sufficient time for these arrangements to be implemented. A practice run is recommended to confirm all functions work as expected and on the computers where you intend this work to take place (to check permissions allow this).

Using Action Learning to Create new Levels of Understanding and Knowledge

To build on the above a proven approach which the SWAPP manager could use is to create an action learning set (Revans 2011). An effective action learning approach will follow the cycle of experiment, reflection, action and learning. Kolb (1984) outlines the cycle of experiential learning. This is a four

stage rolling cycle of:

- Concrete Experience;
- Observations and Reflections;
- Formation of Abstract Concepts and Generalisations;
- Testing Implications of Concepts in New Situations.

The most potent aspect of the learning cycle is to work through and complete all the distinct stages. These may be unfamiliar to participants as there will be individual as well as group short cut habits. It will be beneficial to appreciate applying different learning styles and stages, to help unlearn some behaviours, to place trust in different strengths which generate fresh perspectives, new insights, learning and actions from the group process.

This provides the opportunity to experience new ways to enquire about practice and use information systems, data and evidence to raise new questions and perspectives about practice and to facilitate thinking and organising for better outcomes. In this way the SWAPP manager will be contributing to the process of adapting to external changes including responding to the increased demands and expectations on children's services, the findings from the Munro review and building capacity in line with the Professional Capabilities Framework.

Revans (2011) proposed that people and organisations flourish when their learning is equal to or greater than the rate of environmental change. He postulated an equation where learning consists of two main elements: the use of programmed knowledge, and the use of questioning insight. As the environment changes responding to it purely on the basis of what is already known using existing skills and techniques will be insufficient to address the challenges being faced.

The use of questioning insight derived from fresh questions and critical reflection is an essential ingredient to build on what is already known. In this way both understanding and practice develop and improve to address changing demands and contexts Revans also made a distinction made between puzzles and complex problems. Puzzles have 'best' solutions and can be solved by applying existing knowledge usually with the help of experts. Hence a puzzle can be solved. Problems on the other hand have no right answers and are best approached through questioning to provoke new lines of thinking, understanding, action and learning. Such problems may persist in new forms and/or become dissolved and approaches and responses will evolve and improve through ongoing use of questioning insight as well as the application of programmed knowledge.

Consequently questioning of the organisational norms and information management practices and creative use of information systems can be a key role for the SWAPP manager. In part this could tell you what might be done as alternatives to engaging in fashionable and expensive restructuring or IT led system change. It might also give some answers to other issues dealt with in the remainder of this document.

The SWAPP manager can help to lead learning and enquiry and accepting of responsibility for outcomes lead performance. (Has our work helped the child?). To do this they must explore results-based data in non-blaming ways and keep the focus on what can be done. It is important to remember that taking responsibility for good performance is easy, but doing the same for unsatisfactory or below standard performance requires tenacity and vision.

The following are examples of questioning

when using data to understand interactions and outcomes:

• How has activity and performance changed over time?
• How does activity and performance vary among service units?
• What is the context within which these results are taking place?
• Why are there significant differences in numbers?
• What attitudes drive behaviour and what does this tell us about the people involved?
• Where are the few areas we can consider changes to have the most impact?
• What makes a difference for children?

It may also be helpful to adopt a stance where rather than seeing an individual element as a problem to see it as a challenge to be overcome. You might want to consider whether the problem or issue can be re-framed in such a way as to make this possible. In doing so it will be important to focus on what might be done differently and whether this is within the control of those involved.

Learning cannot be undertaken in isolation from governance groups and the senior management team. The scope and conditions for the SWAP programme locally will need to include provision for this type of learning mechanism to be used. If so this may include access to LSCB and other key groups and perhaps local politicians to participate in the feedback and learning and to use the data and evidence from the learning to support associated policy review. The challenge to both operational norms and the assumptions of the governing groups and the culture may result in creative tension and discomfort. This will be important learning for the SWAPP manager as well as the leadership team who will also need to find ways to manage as assumptions are challenged and people move outside their comfort zones. In this context, there is

critical value in this tension and discomfort as fuel for adaptive work and achieving improvement.

Developing Multi-Agency Working

There are a whole variety of other groups involved with child safeguarding in addition to children's services including health, social care and police as well and other local departments and centres e.g. schools, children's centres, benefits and housing etc. Each of these will have their own recording and information system arrangements.

On many occasions in the past the communication between the agencies has been called into question on individual cases. The over arching question of exchanging information and data across IT systems has been considered before but in this context needs to be looked at again. If responsibility is to be taken for the child's journey there must be a way to share data, information and intelligence between these agencies and groups and the professionals involved in order to formulate appropriate actions.

The opportunity and challenge for children's services is to find ways to access and capture and interpret all the key events and agency responses involved in this journey. In this regard the need to protect the child from serious harm should be seen as paramount and not be compromised by the use of data protection legislation and other similar provisions as defences against data sharing. The public expectation will be that such sharing happens in the interests of seeking to avoid harm and injury. Whilst legal advice may need to be sought, the question that should be asked is how can data be legally shared rather than what prevents us sharing data. This will ensure that any agency's policy and actions can be framed in the light of positive advice.

In 2008 Devon LSCB commissioned the first

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to address the central concern, in particular children and young peoples services (CYPS), the police and the health service, namely the responsibility to systematically identify and assess risks to children and young people and where appropriate take action. Key features of these arrangements involve a secure data environment and supervised protocols for access to multiple multi-agency databases. In addition, the provision of dedicated analysts able to search and find and assemble data about individuals, families and households using risk based time scales of respectively 4 hours, one day or three days for decisions and actions.

These arrangements have since been evolved to establish more effective ways information can be shared between agencies and professionals notwithstanding the interests of safeguarding the child. Additionally, this initiative has illustrated a human and professional development process; The development of a safe professional environment to address a lack of familiarity between some agencies about how to work within a complex multi-professional context and with the associated data access, data quality issues and how to drive forward accurate interpretation and more timely actions.

The learning from this is probably an ongoing process where insights from information management, practice and outcomes can be used to shape operations at the front door and also inform future commissioning of early help services. The multi-agency safeguarding hub approach also illustrates wider work to be done with diverse professionals and their managers practice responses to better to serve the best interests of children. Another critical aspect is alignment of strategic focus across agencies together with co-located operations involving service managers able to have dialogue about service improvement across agency boundaries.

As examples of local police, health and social care service commissioning evolve, there may be further examples of multi-professional co-location and integrated working practices. New understandings will need to be developed about how to assemble and act on a more complete picture earlier and optimise use of multi-professional resources. The SWAPP manager's experiences with capturing, analysing aggregate rich data and information about the child's journey will be an important contribution to this capability, creating thinking and information to help develop service opportunities around early help and prevention.

Summary

In considering how to move forward on data and information to aid service improvement SWAPP Managers and others should:

- Understand that data and information is filtered according to an individuals' perspectives and knowledge;
- Look for a means of evaluating the child's journey and outcomes;
- Use action learning to promote new levels of understanding;
- Facilitate the development of multi-agency working including appropriate sharing of data and information in order to protect children.

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Working with Representations of the Whole System

The term 'whole system' is used here to mean the whole of the local safeguarding system from early help, prevention through to the authority taking care of a child. It includes the actions of all of the relevant local agencies. It recognises that these are not discrete but interconnected and with impact and influence on each other. It presupposes that managing the whole system is preferable to managing the pieces. It also reflects the fact that we need to consider the child's journey and that this journey may be through several practice and recording systems.

Where We Are

Children's services have historically been delivered by large local authority organisations comprising a number of departments responsible for duties and activities defined by statute. Categories for reporting on activity were traditionally defined by administrative demands driven by CIPFA and latterly the DfE and its predecessors rather than the professional service groups.

Michael Earl (1988) has described how information systems were typically commissioned by the Chief Finance Officer and this meant IT systems initially supported by the financial and administrative roles of the organisation. However he illustrated how a range of strategies will be needed to support an evolving organisation and to inform Information Technology strategy (both information systems strategy and information management strategy). He proposes a new IT relationship with the business of the organisation suggesting the need to develop 'bottom up', 'inside out', and 'outside in' as well as 'top down' information strategies.

In the author's experience there is a tendency for there to be significant investment in top down process improvement and IT systems in many organisations. This can leave the front line service somewhat isolated from the process and with the systems still not meeting their professional needs. More of a bottom up process would address this imbalance but to this needs to be added 'outside in' and 'inside out' improvement and innovation. Some examples of what may be lacking are dynamic analysis of user needs, feedback and family partnership, and dynamic access to both local and wider professional knowledge; there is also considerable scope for potentially applying other changes in communication technologies and techniques such as visualisation.

Avison & Fitzgerald (2006) in their study of Information System Design Methodologies illustrate where scientific analysis and traditional IT systems design approaches break up and are less successful in a complex situation or environments:

> *Human activity systems are more complex and human components in particular may react differently when examined singly to when they play a role in the whole system.*

This has implications for the future specification and commissioning of an information system where requirements must be subordinate and aligned to the goals and purpose of the 'whole system' activity. In fact most children's services case management systems in use have been designed to conform to highly prescriptive recording and workflow (derived from the Integrated Children's System) within a relatively narrow boundary of activity. Typically this does not include early help and prevention and multi-agency partnership working. It may also be the case that the supplier industry has not yet matched the need to support the complexity involved including evaluative data

capture, reporting, service experimentation, and systems for learning and adaptation.

Where We Need To Go

Following the analogy of the map, which nonetheless is not the terrain but merely a two dimensional representation, an information system can assist with navigation of a landscape given three provisos:

- It needs to be sufficiently representative of the real world which in this case means professional thinking, choices and decision-making;
- There needs to be richer representation and recording of social work thinking and practice interaction as related elements of the child's situation and journey emerges over time;
- Interactive reports need to be available to front line managers which bring all of the complex data into one place with the facility to drill down to the underlying contextual information.

If on the other hand we continue to rely upon monitoring conformity (to a simplified representation) the scope for improving service impact is not only significantly diminished but also the capacity of the workforce to develop is fundamentally undermined.

The approach has implications for senior management and governance groups who will need to adopt a distributed leadership approach in order to facilitate the desired adaptation and improvement in safeguarding and child care. As was stated earlier the challenge is for information systems to support a more complete and representative picture of the child and family journey. This will to be adaptable to future changes in terms of emergent practice thinking aimed at optimising the child's journey and outcomes in various different local contexts.

Previously in this document we have talked about the concept of helping. An information system related to children's services needs to comprise a representative model of helping. It should contain tools to help understand people, relationships, and professional social work recording practice thinking as well as activity and it should enable dynamic access to what is making a difference to outcomes. (N.B. You should not expect there to be a standard list of things which will make a difference to outcomes for every child and family).

The above can only happen if the system is reliably populated with appropriately linked, usable current and historical data. This can only be achieved by the ownership and learning of the information systems by the professionals involved in the work. Such ownership will not simply be achieved by product training and support; rather it will require deeper professional engagement in the specification, design, implementation and revision of information systems. Professional engagement in these processes will in turn influence the thinking surrounding social work practice.

Whole System Performance and Improvement

Elsewhere in this reference document we have introduced a range of thinking about approaching whole system improvement and performance, including perspectives on leadership, the team and organisational context. In particular we have stressed the importance of double loop learning and doing wider work on enquiry and thinking about problems, recognising complex relationships and their impact on the child's journey and outcomes.

Most importantly groups should be formed representing intelligent and vibrant learning about the whole system performance, and there should be bridges and an affinity

between members of these groups. This can create shared experience and understanding and common values across groups at various levels within organisations, thereby providing the basis for collective service and performance improvement.

In a counter-intuitive way individuals can be helped to become more effective by understanding the limits of their learning and be open to participating in more effective team performance and organisational learning. Working to overcome and look beyond organisational defences and blocks will generate new options and capacity to do any necessary adaptive work.

Systems thinking, generalised frameworks and models can help with the process of generating fresh insights about problems. Systems dynamics offers a way of creating causal loop diagrams to help groups explore concepts they use and to understand multiple interactions and relationships surrounding a problem.

These understandings and complex interactions can now be built into a software model where actual data about activity, flows, use of resources and costs can be incorporated. The software simulation model allows any interested party to enter, amend and change parameters in order to generate insights about what might emerge as a consequence over time. The validity of the model to make useful predictions can be explored by the group within the laboratory to help consider policy options and to more precisely calibrate and implement system changes.

The author is involved in software modelling in Children's Services and has developed a model in the area of early help to families. The model shows how family support services can impact on family populations and uses some of the findings from previous 'Think Family' prevention programmes. It

can thus illustrate the dynamics of engaging families at an early point as well as illustrate the costs accumulated across agencies by missed opportunities and reactive responses at later stages.

We have found in case study areas there is a lack of rich data or data joined up to show decision making about attempts to engage families across agencies earlier. This gap is now being worked on retrospectively with social work practitioners and will help to populate the model. This will assist with an opportunity in one area to design new front door arrangements as well as devise dynamic indicators to help with implementation.

In relation to older children the following illustrates what can be achieved when more rich data is available. Work with the Centre for Social Justice involved creating a representation of the youth justice system. A software model was constructed using the key elements and concepts of activity and interaction in this system. The model was then populated with real world data and run forward in time to show change in activity and flow through the system.

We used data from 6 case study areas to illustrate possible system conditions and their relationship to key service policy and practice parameters.

Managing an average of 600 incidents per annum. The worst simulation parameters generated over 300 offending incidents post sentence, with over 20 custodial sentences per annum. Using National Audit Office costs the predicted total was over £2.7m per annum. The best simulation parameters generated under 200 offending incidents post sentence, with around 7 custodial sentences per annum with projected costs of under £1.2m (Radley 2013).

This is an example of using 'whole system'

dynamics to illustrate counter intuitive insights about policy and practice and how to optimally focus effort and resources. It also provides the possibility of sharing system knowledge (about how things work) between professionals, managers, leaders and policy makers across and at all levels of the organisation.

The mix of development work outlined in this reference document will hopefully assist with a renewal of a wider organisation focus on its purpose regarding safeguarding and looking after children. It can also assist management in a reorientation to improvement and formulating more effective responses to the unique circumstances of a particular local authority. It can also critically help with engaging with and enabling the professional workforce to generate more of the desired impact, and drive forward the provision of information management systems to deepen the capability to do this.

Summary

- ICT systems present challenges for all organisations and traditional IT commissioning methodologies and supplier approaches do not fit with current strategic organisational challenges.
- The SWAPP experience can be an important step in experimenting with richer data and information representation to support policy and practice, improvement strategies and systems.
- Operations research tools now exist to explore dynamic representations of services to help generate insights about optimising performance and outcomes.

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The Organisational Context

System Conditions for SWAPP Success

When we sat in our living rooms watching with horror as the Challenger Space Shuttle explode within moments of launch it would have been hard to believe that this possibility had been foreseen by engineers who were working on the project. It is also perhaps surprising to realise that a key contributing factor to this was information not being *heard* within the organisation which has been attributed to the culture that existed within NASA. Edgar Schein (2011) commented that:

> *In some crises, like the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986, I've heard people argue that the engineers weren't competent. In fact, they raised concerns in advance about the O-ring at least twice, but they were overruled, and stopped squawking. Should they have held their ground?*

The Challenger disaster can be seen as poignant example of the need for top leadership within an organisation to be connected with the operational front line and for the culture of the organisation to support staff who raise concerns about practice. The need to be connected to the operational frontline is also a fundamental requirement in another high risk enterprise, child protection and care services. Services where getting it wrong can have tragic outcomes for children and families and where as the late Gerry Smale maintained decision making is more complicated than rocket science, because of the variability of human behaviour.

However the experience of the author and

other anecdotal evidence suggest that there is often significant surprise at the political and senior leadership level when serious case reviews or inspections reveal worrying deficits in frontline services. This is concerning because it means that service users are being put at risk, that service and reputational risk is not being recognised or managed and that the leadership of the organisation is not connected to the frontline.

Michael Preston-Shoot (2012) draws a parallel between social work practice and medical practice, relying on (McNamee et al 2009) he argues that:

> *The hidden curriculum, a cocktail of organisational policies, resource allocation decisions, use of positional power and interpersonal interactions, negatively impacts on the development of professionalism … .*

This is I think close to arguing that organisational culture is a powerful force in setting expectations for staff. In concluding his argument that the hidden curriculum undermines good practice, Preston-Shoot argues that organisations need to promote legal and ethical literacy *and to provide the best organisational architecture so that individuals and agencies act care-fully.*

Programmes such as SWAPP and other peer challenge programmes present a valuable opportunity for an organisation to gain a knowledgeable outsider perspective on frontline practice. However these benefits will only be realised if the system conditions are established to ensure that this benefit occurs. Inviting a manager into the organisation

to coach or mentor a peer manager or to challenge organisational practice will be a chancy affair unless it is managed effectively. The manager needs to be welcomed into the organisation and the organisation needs to be open to the learning that is potentially being created. To maximise the learning thought also needs to be given to how the learning will be disseminated. The following provides some considerations relevant to SWAPP programmes.

Welcoming the Help

Schein (2009) who has worked for a number of high risk industries, sees that the nature of the relationship between staff and managers is critical in the effective management of risk. Schein has identified the need for a culture of trust to be created where staff can speak openly about the risks they are managing and to feel psychologically safe. If the culture of the organisation is such that staff don't feel safe to speak out or simply to share their views and perspectives then clearly this will impede organisational learning and may suppress essential information related to risk.

Whilst they may be less inhibited by organisational culture much of the above is as applicable for guest managers within a service as it is for permanent staff. The SWAPP Manager will need to feel valued, trusted and listened to if their contribution is to be maximised. Some ways of achieving this are:

• Ensuring that a member of the leadership team has overall responsibility for the programme;
• Considering how the individual will enter and be inducted into the organisation;
• Giving a very clear message to the SWAPP manager that their help is valued;
• Being clear as to how they will be reporting their findings;
• Having a process by which they can raise concerns about practice that might put service users or others at risk.

Preparing the Service

It is important that the service area that is hosting a SWAPP Manager or subject to peer challenge is prepared for the experience. The section of the Reference Document Overcoming Defensive Responses argues that defensive responses are a key inhibitor to organisational learning. A key element of the preparation needs to be about giving thought to how the service area is prepared for the experience and how defensive responses will be reduced in order that learning can be maximised. Some of the ways that this can be achieved might include:

• Being clear about the role of the SWAPP Manager;
• Giving staff permission to work openly with the SWAPP Manager;
• Being clear that this is about practice improvement and not about targeting individual members of staff;
• Giving clear support to the SWAPP Manager;
• Providing information about how the results of the work will be managed and disseminated.

Care also needs to be taken to ensure that the independence of the SWAPP manager is promoted. The message being given should also not unintentionally align the SWAPP Manager with one part of the organisation i.e. senior managers or with one side or other within any organisational dynamics or politics.

A context needs to be created where staff are encouraged to talk truthfully with the SWAPP Manager about the risks they are managing and any concerns they may have as well as the positive aspects of the service.

Learning the Lessons

Schein (2010) clearly identifies the links between organisational learning and culture. He suggests that:

Learning-oriented leadership must portray confidence that active problem solving leads to learning and, thereby, set an appropriate example for other members of the organization.

From this we can see that an important aspect of learning the lessons from any SWAPP intervention will be the example set by the leadership of the host service. It must be made clear that the learning the SWAPP intervention brings is welcome and valued.

In more practical terms giving thought to how the learning will be disseminated will need to considered. This may include:

- Debriefing of the SWAPP Manager and of any managers they may have supported;
- Feedback to the staff in the service area concerned;
- Meeting with or briefing of the senior leadership team;
- Feedback to the LSCB or other strategic group;
- How feedback will be given to local politicians including the Lead Member for Children's Services.

The home authority of the SWAPP Manager should also consider how they will benefit from the learning accrued by the manager who has been SWAPPed and any implications for local practice.

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The Commissioning Process and Agreement

The following outlines the key considerations when two authorities agree to a SWAP programme.

It will be necessary to agree the overall purpose of the programme and what each authority involved want to gain. It will also be important to agree what each of the authorities hope will be gained from each individual SWAPP placement. This will provide clarity for the participants and forms the basis for evaluation of individual placements and the overall programme. However, in setting the programme objectives it will be important to allow flexibility in the approach and for this to be able to be influenced by the ongoing experience of the authorities and the participants. This can be achieved by setting review points for individual placements and the overall programme.

Some of the areas the agreements will need to cover include:

• What it is that the programme is seeking to achieve;
• The practice and performance issues that the authorities are seeking to address;
• The service areas that will be included;
• How the programme will be reviewed, monitored and evaluated;
• Lead management responsibility in each authority for the SWAP programme;
• The management responsibility for each area of the programme;
• The way that the SWAP programme is to work, including the managers to be involved;
• The overall nature of the managers involvement and broad agreement of the work that they will be expected to undertake;
• The time commitments that the involved managers will be expected to make;

• The management arrangements for individual SWAPP placements including changes to the agreed responsibilities and how any issues or difficulties will be resolved;
• Agreement for access to information systems and confidential client information;
• A confidentiality agreement;
• The responsibility for incurred costs such as mileage, subsistence and where relevant accommodation.

In order to avoid any confusion it may be helpful to be explicit that throughout the secondment the seconded worker is an employee of their home agency and remains under the overall management and direction of that agency. Consequently they are not subject to nor can they be required to participate in the disciplinary or grievance processes of the host agency.

The following are some practical points that need to be considered for each individual placement or scheme:

• The intended outcome from the placement including what it is hoped will be achieved including any service improvements that the host authority are seeking to achieve;
• Timings and where relevant dates for the involvement or placement;
• How it is anticipated that the SWAPP managers will undertake their work;
• The line management, supervision and support arrangements for the managers concerned including how any issues or difficulties will be resolved;
• Timings for review and ongoing evaluation;
• The reporting arrangements for the outcomes for the work including how these will be fed back to senior management and where relevant strategic groups.

To avoid frustration, it will also be important to ensure that attention is paid to the details such as parking, building access and access to IT systems.

Managing the SWAPP

A project management approach can be very useful in developing, evaluating and quality assuring your experience within the SWAP programme and to keep a clear focus on both its beginning and end.

Project management offers a systematic approach to managing the process using a number of logical phases and steps which enable you to define, plan, organise and complete the SWAPP. It also offers a means of seeing the bigger picture and in developing an appreciation of how each person's role affects the area of work.

Having clear objectives and agreeing desired outcomes starts with defining your SWAP programme goals; planning the work to be undertaken; leading the implementation of any plans; monitoring the progress of the impact of SWAPP and finally, completing the project to ensure that it is embedded within the team or service mainstream activity. Any process is going to be iterative where the later stages of the SWAP programme can be informed by knowledge gained from earlier ones. Stages to agree might include:

Purpose – an understanding of the changes desired and why this is needed.

Definition – an outline of what SWAPP itself is seeking to achieve and defining this in terms of scope and objectives. Definition would also include a realistic analysis of the context, constraints, stakeholders and risks during the process.

Plan – a map of the sequence, duration and interdependencies of the specific steps required to achieve the SWAPP project objectives in terms of any desired milestones (including intermediate ones) activities (the actual work to be undertaken) and resources required (people, materials and other resources indicated) to enhance its success.

Evaluation – upon completion, a determination of whether the SWAPP objectives and benefits have been achieved and what else needs to follow. Project evaluation cannot be seen as optional but is a crucial stage to be planned from the outset.

Managing people and project relationships
Weiss and Wysocki (1992) offer a 12 point guide for effective project leadership which capitalises on a systems approach and demonstrates how peer support might be valued:

1. Do not over-direct, over observe or over-report.
2. Recognise differences in individuals and have a keen appreciation of each person's unique contribution.
3. Help those involved see 'problems' as 'changes'.
4. Encourage staff and stakeholders to think how they might be more creative or if they would like to be more creative, and ask them what sort of creative contribution they would most like to make.
5. Allow more freedom for individuals to guide their work.
6. Train yourself and others to respond to the positive aspects of any proposed ideas rather than react to the often easier to spot negative ones. This follows on from the ideas underpinning Appreciative Inquiry which are referred to in other sections of this document.
7. Develop greater frustration tolerances for mistakes and errors.
8. Provide a safe atmosphere for failures as these are valuable learning experiences.
9. Be a resource person rather than a controller, a facilitator rather than director.
10. Act as a buffer between those you are working with and outside problems or demands coming from senior managers.
11. Enhance your own creative ability through opportunities to attend workshops or seminars, undertake specialist reading and learning how to practice creative

exercises and games. This sets examples for those you are working with and makes it easier for you to recognise and relate to the creative ability of others.

12. Make sure that innovative ideas are transmitted upwards and that feedback is given to ensure that any ideas are given a fair hearing and taken seriously.

If your SWAPP project works involves working across a number of boundaries, both internally and externally, you may need to be prepared to sell ideas, negotiate and problem solve, and work to resolve any conflicts that may arise. Peer reviewing can often fall between authority and control structures in a large organisation so those involved will have to be adept at political skills as well as project skills and good communication.

Some of the areas of skill development within your SWAPP project may involve:

• Using different communication techniques;
• Team building and group work;
• Conflict resolution strategies;
• Managing effective meetings.

The Role of Senior Managers

Senior managers have a crucial sponsoring role to play both during the planning and implementation of SWAPP, in terms of establishing its legitimacy, making resources available and endorsing progress. For this reason, those involved in SWAPP must be proactive about securing and maintaining senior management support throughout as a number of issues that can arise need to be anticipated to ensure that the aims are not undermined.

Those hosting SWAPP can take actions to improve SWAPP team relationships with senior management and to deflect unnecessary and unhelpful involvement by micro managing or underestimating or overestimating its significance in the grander scheme of things and making unrealistic demands. The execution of SWAPP may depend on the involvement and cooperation of several departments or functions within an organisation around safeguarding practice.

Senior managers have an important role to play in sponsoring and encouraging good relations with all interested parties to get their support. This may not be a straightforward issue, since each function will have its own priorities and interests; they may be indifferent or even hostile to SWAPP if this is not introduced and explained properly.

Ofsted (2012) noted that where senior managers provide scrutiny of plans in safeguarding work, particularly in complex situations and were willing to get closely involved with practice, motivating and trusting relationships and behaviour was mirrored throughout the organisation. This results in both front line managers and social work staff feeling more confident about asserting children's needs and clearly stating what needed to change. Effective support depended on the creation of organisational cultures that were characterised by high expectations, high support and high challenge and this empowering culture should be embedded in the SWAPP programme through the engagement of significant people at every level.

Of course there may be times when SWAPP is not successful and social work has witnessed its fair share of failed projects including those which go on to inform much larger organisational change due to other urgent pressures. Strong and knowledgeable political and corporate support are vital to enable directors of children's services to work through these issues to develop supportive organisations (Ofsted, 2012).

Summary

• Outlines the need for having clear

objectives and agreeing desired outcomes;
• Suggests a project management approach to developing and evaluating the SWAPP;
• Describes the skills and approaches that project management requires;
• Considers the role of senior managers.

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Evaluating the SWAPP

Many organisations tend not to review their successes, as they either take these for granted or else these are claimed by individuals, it is also more likely that only failures are closely reviewed (Stanley and Manthorpe, 2004). This is an important aspect of the SWAP programme in terms of taking time to evaluate.

Closing a SWAPP project might be seen as less important and terminating the project members' roles formally and to obtain approval for the work done and the outcomes achieved might seem too obvious. However, this is important as the project is part of an on-going improvement process. Realising what has gone well and not so well is an essential precursor to future actions.

A final report should always be composed and we suggest some questions to ask when closing your SWAPP project:

- Were the goals, aims and expected outcomes achieved?
- Was the experience consistent with what was expected from the organisations/ services/teams involved?
- Was the SWAPP project completed on time and within the resources available?
- Did it work to the agreed specification?
- Were those involved satisfied with the experience and the outcomes and how can this be demonstrated and known?
- Did the host organisation or service have the required skills to complete the SWAPP and if not what were the gaps and how might these be addressed for future programmes?
- How well was the SWAPP project supported throughout its life?
- Are there any areas relating to specific departments/partnerships that could be reviewed in terms of effective working together?

- Are the outcomes from the SWAPP project actually useful and meaningful?
- What skills, knowledge and expertise did the key participants gain during the project and what evidence can be provided to demonstrate these?
- What was learnt and what is still to be achieved?

Writing a formal report enables you and the host organisation to document the memory or history of the SWAPP project and it should be disseminated so that others involved or not involved can share in the learning achieved as well as finding out about its outcomes. This usually includes elements on the overall success and performance of the project using some sort of audit information as described in earlier sections as well as any techniques used. Finally the key people for overseeing SWAPP should provide an assessment of the projects strengths and weaknesses and any recommendations for next steps and future developments. Celebration at this stage, no matter how minor, is also very important.

Taking your post SWAPP project review one step further would involve thinking how this contributes towards organisational learning cycles. This is one of the fundamental purposes of SWAPP in terms of how dissemination of the learning from the participants' knowledge and experience helps to build future organisational capabilities.

Celebrating success is an important aspect of the SWAP programme. In terms of taking time to stress the importance of storytelling, dialogue and conversation, in building a bridge between individual and organisational learning. Stanley and Manthorpe's (2004) research demonstrates that prior to becoming a 'performing entity' project teams develop the norms, values and beliefs (implicitly or explicitly) which

guide their group behaviour. They assert that several aspects of this experience can be captured and used as a foundation for further reflection and conversation. They recommend a social constructionist approach to project evaluation and suggest a role for an impartial evaluator within organisations which frequently use projects like SWAPP as a tool for organisational design.

Social constructionists believe that personal experience and meaning is not created by the individual alone but is embedded and shaped by their culture. During the life of SWAPP the project may take up a lot of time and energy of stakeholders and as it operates within an ingrained organisational culture, ethos or set of moral codes, values and rules. This narrative potentially becomes an important source of organisational learning and needs to be reflected upon and understood. The learning that has been created needs to be reflected back into the organisation through learning events such as seminars or team events.

Summary

- Remember to celebrate your successes;
- Consider how you will close the project;
- When evaluating ask critical key questions;
- Write a final report;
- Take the learning forward.

References

Stanley, N., Manthorpe, J. (2004) The Age of the Inquiry: Learning and Blaming in Health and Social Care. London, Routledge.

Creating a Culture of Learning and Success

SWAPP as a Learning Intervention

SWAPP will be a learning intervention both for the SWAPP Manager and for the organisation into which they are seconded. This section considers how to make the best use of this opportunity.

Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.
		Chinese proverb attributed to Confucius

There is an underlying assumption that the provision of training and people's participation in it solves a wide range of issues relating to the need for change. What is often not fully understood is that this is the beginning of learning not the end. Indeed it is usually the case that learning only takes place when the training is put into effect. Using that newly acquired knowledge and putting it into practice demonstrates true learning.

We do not all learn in the same way. Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® we know that some learn by wrote, following work books, ticking boxes and achieving the right answer; some learn by actually carrying things out, they need to experience it for themselves; some learn conceptually and seek to be competent, they need competent people to help them learn; whilst others are individualistic learners, they need to fit new learning into what they have already learnt as individuals. Whatever system of learning styles is used, we need to understand that there are these differences if we are trying to change the way things are done.

There will be individuals who do not easily relate to doing the things now necessary for improving the safeguarding and care of children. These may include front line workers and their managers who may not become involved if their learning styles are not recognised. For example those who learn best by following work books may be looking for what the new work book is. Getting to grips with the full set of complexities requires these people in Myers-Briggs terms to learn more about using their opposite preferences. This might then give them the conceptual frames of reference to get to grips with what is now required.

If someone *doesn't get it* as a result of the approach being adopted then it needs to be worked through differently for them. Each person needs to relate to the approach outlined in this document in their own way, and then to apply themselves in the full knowledge of the potential implications of their own methods.

SWAPP is not just about individuals; neither is it just about the frontline. The whole organisation and indeed its partners need to develop their approaches to enable the service to perform in an improved way. Organisational learning should take place to support improvement as opposed to presuming it is just an issue for a specific part of the organisation. The organisation also needs to think about and then own the learning that it wants to capture from the SWAPP.

Child care and safeguarding is a complex service to carry out, it does not conform to an easily assimilated set of rules. It is carried

out within a multi-disciplinary environment with the consequent impact of the variety of learning styles and organisational cultures involved. If the way in which it is delivered is to be developed all those involved need to learn to do things differently, and the organisational contexts within which they sit needs to enable that to happen.

The performance of the organisation depends on how well people work together. Local authorities and their partners need to evolve this working together in a way that supports a systemic approach to the safeguarding and care of children. It has already been said in previous sections that this work is complex and that the results are emergent i.e. you may start out with something in mind but you may end up somewhere different. Consequently services need to be immediately responsive to the changing needs and risks to the service user, and this needs to be reflected in the way in which performance is assessed.

This is quite different to many other local authority services. To gain the best results this difference needs to be recognised by all those who have an impact on the service. The support functions need to develop their understanding of how best to support the frontline social workers and managers and not assume that solutions used for other services can automatically be used in this sector.

Top management and local politicians similarly need to develop the same level of understanding so that their expectations and decisions support that frontline effort. There needs to be regular means of reviewing where matters have progressed in order to help reinforce the right kinds of performance measurement. This is particularly critical in respect of qualitative information which can be less easy to collect and less easy to understand. It is often this qualitative performance (i.e. was the child helped

appropriately) which communities are particularly interested in as this may help to guide and support other elements of community development.

Each local authority's needs will be different. The organisational learning processes that are used need to be tuned to these differences. Their form and content should be determined with due reference to what has happened historically, what forward aspirations there might be, and the state of development and skills of the various parts of the organisation. There will need to be scope for questioning how and why things are done, allowing experimentation to take place, and for new ways of designing targets and measuring performance to take place. It may help to follow a particular theoretical approach of which there are many. The following overview is put forward as one way of proceeding. It is not meant to be a mechanistic process but one where each organisation attunes what it is going to do to achieve the broad concepts put forward.

Nancy Dixon in The Organisational Learning Cycle (1999) puts forward an approach containing four steps:

1. Widespread generation of information;
2. Integration of new information into the organisational context;
3. Collective interpretation of information;
4. Authority to take responsible action based on the interpreted meaning.

The assumption behind these steps is that step 4 will lead to further generation of information and hence start a further cycle of learning. This makes the process a continuous one rather than having a defined start and end point.

Learning is a dynamic process, evolving through time, so it does not have a beginning and an end, it is a process rather than an event. For organisations to learn there

needs to be a concerted effort to do so and a willingness to grasp the emergent nature of the results.

As well as within courses or other formal events, organisational learning takes place in *hallways* – spaces for communal interaction which allow reflection and discussion of issues, problems and progress. It is unlikely to take place in formal meetings by putting items on learning on business agendas. There needs to be opportunities for thinking, reflecting and discussing away from business as usual. Care should be exercised that the following does not apply:

> *A paradox of organisational learning is that organisations can only learn through their individual members, yet organisations create systemic constraints that prevent their individual members from learning.*
> Nancy Dixon 1999

Organisations can go backwards as well as forwards. A change in the people within the organisation can cause this backward move as well as a forward move. There is a particular need to integrate new people into the organisation's state of development whilst at the same time making use of their specific contribution to moving things forward.

Summary

In carrying out SWAPP there needs to be an understanding that:

- Individuals have a variety of learning styles which need to be recognised in processes of seeking improvement;
- SWAPP needs to be about organisational learning as well as individual learning;
- Concerted action needs to be taken to enable organisational learning;
- Each local authority needs to define it's own approach;
- Organisational learning needs to include

support functions and departments, top management and politicians;
- Space needs to be created for thinking, reflection, discussion and experimentation.

References

Barger N.J. & Kirby L.K.(1995), The Challenge of Change in Organizations; Helping employees thrive in the new frontier, Palo Alto, CA: Davis-Black Publishing for Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.

Dixon N. (1999), The Organisational Learning Cycle, How we can learn effectively, Aldershot: Gower Publishing Ltd.

Isachsen O. & Berens L.V. Working Together, A personality-centred approach to management, Irvine, CA: Institute for Management Development.

Senge P.M. (1990), The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation, London: Random House.

Preparing the Workforce for Experimentation

If the organisation is to do something different the workforce needs to be prepared for it.

Most people are at their happiest when successfully carrying out work with which they are familiar. They feel secure in the knowledge that they are doing the right thing. In the social work field this is perhaps less so as each child and family they come into contact with bring their own particular set of challenges. Changing the way that any aspect of child care and child protection is undertaken brings uncertainty and an element of risk.

An environment needs to be created where it is OK to do something different. This may be difficult if past history is littered with failed initiatives, and much easier if there is a record of success. To prepare the ground for experimentation there needs to be clear aims in mind and some idea of what success might look like. The change may have a quite different effect to the one that is initially predicted and this possibility should be identified at the outset. This should mean that everyone is more alert to what is happening in case adjustments need to be made as progress emerges.

It is often attractive to suggest doing something which has succeeded elsewhere. This needs to be handled with care. People's natural reaction tends to be to identify the differences with that place and their own context. These may or may not make the change appropriate or otherwise. What might be missed is that the success will have been generated in a different climate, a different culture, and by a different set of people. So whilst it might look fine by it may not be successful in this other context. Progress is best made by involving the workforce in the change. If experiments are to be carried out their purpose needs to be clear, the reasons why need to be stated, and who is likely to be directly involved also needs to be identified. It may be appropriate to carry out pilot exercises which can be evaluated and reviewed before extending the new approach to all concerned.

With any change process people come on board after different lengths of time. It may be helpful to view this like the adoption of a new product. The first people who buy it are called innovators, quickly followed by early adopters – those people who respond to "have you seen the latest" whatever. These are followed by the early majority, the late majority, and the laggards, the latter are the ones who do not have a computer, a mobile phone or an iPad.

Innovators and early adopters need to be identified as these will be more open to experimentation. They sometimes need to be reined back rather than encouraged to move forward. This doesn't mean you should ignore everyone else. They all need to know what is happening and why, so that the laggards do not hold undue sway. It is very easy for these people to react negatively to any new approach, they may fear what it might bring for them and they might not want to embrace it at all. They may be motivated to protect the organisation from "unwelcome" change.

There are risks involved in any change process and these need to be identified and shared in advance. There should be discussion about how these are to be managed and what support will be available by those undertaking those risks. Openness is perhaps the most important thing, followed by doing what you say you are going to do and sticking to it. This is most likely to give everyone the confidence to join in the change process and hence improve the bottom line results which ultimately emerge. A regular review process will be needed

which should continue the process of staff involvement. If things are not progressing as envisaged the people involved need to be asked their opinion as to why that is. They may have suggestions for subtle alterations which may make the difference. If things are going well that should be celebrated, but a check should be made that such progress can be sustained and is not the result of extraneous factors. All of this should help to ensure momentum is maintained to the benefit of service users and the organisation.

Summary

Most people prefer certainty so experimentation requires preparation. The key steps in this are:

- Understanding the previous history of success of new initiatives;
- Thinking through what the proposal is, not just borrowing it from elsewhere;
- Involve the workforce in the change before you start, ask their opinions;
- Identify the enthusiasts and the laggards and prepare for each;
- Identify the risks and the means of managing them;
- Establish a review process and involve everyone in it.

References

Johnson, G, Scholes, K, (1989) Exploring Corporate Strategy: Text and Cases, Prentice Hall.

Influencing Culture and Contexts

Organisational culture is set by all those people involved in it, both management and staff. Changing it requires involvement of all those concerned. Each individual has the opportunity to influence it for the better.

Organisational culture is often defined as *the way we do things around here*. It encompasses the formal and the informal, for example both the team meeting and the corridor conversation. As culture is about behaviours it is something which isn't necessarily written down, it's just the way things usually happen. Culture whilst often seemingly invisible to those who partake in it can be a powerful force that enables or prevents successful organisational development.

Whilst there are simple definitions, culture can be hard to define. There are in fact many definitions of culture and how it is made up. One such definition was coined by Johnson & Scholes (1989) in their book Exploring Corporate Strategy, which talks about formal elements of organisation structure, processes and routines, and informal ones of rituals and myths, symbols, and power structures. Another is by William Bridges in The Character of Organisations where he uses the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® to describe different types of organisational cultures. He also devised a questionnaire for identifying which one applies in each case. Both of these are devices for understanding what the potential make-up is of organisational culture, what to look for in observing it and what the potential implications might be. Whilst it is hard to capture, culture can be seen as the glue which maintains the organisational behaviour.

It is a commonly held myth that organisational culture is set by management.

It isn't; if it were changes could be made by the stroke of a pen. How people behave within organisations is in part set by them, as they choose to follow, ignore or modify any written instructions they may have. There will also be instances where *required* behaviour is not laid down but is assumed, often through an individual assuming that everyone else behaves as they do or following the behaviour of others. Through their leadership behaviours managers can influence the organisational culture, but it is a mistake to believe that culture is a commodity to be managed.

Within a child care and protection context there may be more than one culture in play. There could be a corporate culture, a departmental one, a social work one, and a multi-disciplinary one. Those involved with police, probation, health and so forth will also know that each of these organisations has their own distinct cultures. Just because organisations might be working together doesn't necessarily mean that their cultures will be aligned, or that their working practices will automatically be attuned to what you would expect.

Influencing how these cultures work requires involvement. To get people involved in changing their culture you need to understand what happened in the past to cause it to get like that, and what is driving it now. There will be critical incidents and issues which set behavioural patterns, and instances where behaviour is a response to particular managers' attitudes and approaches. Responses to inspections and enquiries may also figure. So, for example, the practices of an organisation may be overly defensive or risk averse because of how a previous serious case review was managed.

The critical questions that will need to be considered normally surround why things happen in the way that they do. The

behaviour may be ingrained and difficult to shift or sometimes it may be quickly resolved by a conversation between appropriate people. Simply beginning a conversation about organisational culture can lead to shifts in behaviour. Sometimes simply naming it may be enough to cause the cultural behaviour to be noticed and changed. Strangers in organisations are often uniquely positioned to recognise organisational cultural traits and to surface and name these in order that the organisation can begin to address them.

All people need a reason to change, some incentive to get past whatever barriers they have put in place. They may not have the confidence to make the transition, or a lack of confidence in management backing them up. To make a change they will need to buy into the change that is required and then carry it out in practice. A step at a time may be needed in difficult cases, progress needs to happen. If it doesn't, it may cause people to question whether it is the right thing to do with the potential that they return to previously held defensive positions. So if progress is not happening further discussion is needed to check whether the right path is being followed and to make any necessary adjustments. In the section on Thinking Systemically - Seeing Patterns and Connections there was a discussion about emergence. Introducing changes in culture is likely to be subject to emergence and the organisation will evolve a way forward which might not have been entirely foreseen at the outset.

For the SWAPP Manager who may be endeavouring to help facilitate such changes it is essential not to fall into the trap of assuming you are in a managerial role (see section How to Help as Opposed to Managing). It is also essential that you understand your own personal style of doing things (see section Working With Another Organisation), so that you don't give undue weight to those individuals who may be the same as you at the expense of alternative views put forward by others who have a different approach.

Any potential changes in culture need to be understood by those involved. They have to carry on with the changes after the SWAPP Manager has returned to their home base. You should encourage them to think through the implications of what they are saying, particularly if this involves changes by everyone else except themselves! All those involved need to be encouraged to make adjustments within their own span of control, which also includes their ability and opportunity to influence others who may also need to change.

Where culture is being discussed within a management forum, especially a multi-disciplinary one, extra care needs to be exercised. Each manager may agree to something in order to preserve their own position and standing on the assumption that their staff will follow, equally they may block change which threatens their position. Actual results are best secured by involving the staff of each of the multi-disciplinary organisations in the process of change as well as their managers, and often to do that in a collective manner.

Experience shows that if past issues and potential blockages are shared and recognised, this may clear the way for changes and improvements to be made. Failure to deal with previous baggage or to deal with *the elephant in the room* will cause progress to be slow if indeed it occurs at all. If the past is recognised and accepted this should provide a sound basis to establish what should now be done, and more importantly to engage everyone involved in doing it.

Summary

Organisational culture (the way we do things around here) is set by all those involved in it. Facilitating a change in culture can best be achieved by:

• Involving all those who contribute to it;
• Recognising that different parts of the same organisation will have different cultures as well as different organisations;
• Giving due recognition to the past to provide a basis for moving forward;
• Ensuring that management do not believe they are totally in charge of it;
• Being clear on your impact on the scheme of things as a SWAPP Manager.

References

Abbott, P, and Fellows, D, (2012) Missing Links - Building truly interconnected organisations delivers better results, ARCH - Achieving Real Change 2012.

Bridges, W, (1992), The Character of Organisations, Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.

Johnson, G, Scholes, K, (1989) Exploring Corporate Strategy: Text and Cases, Prentice Hall.

HR Practice and Service Improvement

All of the services provided by Children's Services are delivered by people. How those people are recruited, retained, supported and developed plays a major role in the quality of front line service delivery. The way in which the HR function is carried out jointly by line management and HR professionals is a crucial part of facilitating ongoing service improvement.

Overview

Child care and safeguarding services that are well managed should find it easy to recruit and retain staff. This enables services to continue to be delivered as the necessary people are there to do the work. It should also be the case that these staff feel well supported in what they do and have access to training and development to aid maintaining and enhancing their skills. In this respect staff also includes managers and senior managers.

On the other hand those who are struggling to maintain their services, often receiving poor Ofsted assessments, may find it difficult to recruit and retain staff. This obviously makes their problems worse since there may often be insufficient people to do the work. It can be quite difficult to move from this position to that described above.

What makes the difference may not be something major. It is often the smaller things that matter and in particular the attitude that the organisation and its managers have to people related issues. This section therefore flags some of the issues which need to be considered and addressed in order to help create the right kind of culture that facilitates ongoing service improvement. SWAPP Managers are encouraged to watch out for signs about how such issues are approached.

Appraisal and Individual Performance

Appraisal and individual performance systems should reflect agreed social work practice within the organisation. This ideal can be undermined if generic local authority processes are adopted without thought about the particular professional context.

If the efforts of staff are not recognised within appraisal and performance processes they will quickly get the impression that management are not committed to making things work in the way that has been agreed. This can easily lead to poor individual performance and hence poor service to the user and poor organisational performance.

Encouragement should be given to staff who are aiming to improve what they do and learn new skills to aid them doing their job to a higher standard. These processes provide important opportunities to review progress and discuss the level of support the member of staff receives. Good appraisal processes are those where the participants, both managers and staff, carry out their roles with due diligence.

If improvement in performance and/or the raising of standards requires a training input to be made, this needs to happen. In other words make sure commitments made can be delivered, and that staff have the necessary training and support to meet the standards expected of them.

Recruitment, Selection and Promotion

If you are endeavouring to change the way in which child care and child protection are carried out in an organisation, the decisions you take in recruiting, selecting and promoting staff need to be consistent with this new direction. Care needs to be taken that you value those staff you have, particularly those who may have been portrayed as *difficult* in the past. They may

have been expounding what you are now trying to do. In such cases this needs to be given due weight and not ignored in favour of recruiting new people from elsewhere.

Promotions need to be awarded on merit and be seen to be so by the workforce at large. This will then reinforce any positive changes in behaviour and performance that you are trying to encourage.

What Happens When Things go Wrong?

Grievance and disciplinary processes may be rarely looked at until things go wrong. It is far better to examine these away from the heat of an individual case to see that they properly reflect the standards which the organisation aspires to. They should be clear and easily understood by everyone, not just by HR specialists and staff representatives.

There is often a reluctance to invoke both either grievance or disciplinary processes. In general terms if action is taken early it is more easily dealt with and a resolution reached. Failing to act leads to defensive behaviour by both individuals and management.

If a member of staff is aggrieved about how they are being treated they should feel able to raise it formally. This should be seen by management as an opportunity to address what may be a simple difficulty. Similarly should a member of staff not be behaving in an appropriate manner this also should be raised at the earliest opportunity by management. Disciplinary procedures should exist to ensure that behaviour is consistent with requirements and not as a means of punishment.

In operating these HR systems, do the staff feel they are treated fairly, do the managers feel their role is acknowledged and reinforced? The stories that are present in the organisation about the use of these procedures need to be good ones. If they are not action needs to be taken to review how they are used before the next difficult case arises.

In a multi-agency setting a group of staff working together may be subject to different disciplinary and grievance systems. The parent organisations need to come together to determine how they will act jointly in the event of a potential breach of discipline. They may also need to decide how grievances are dealt with if a member of staff is *supervised* by someone from another agency. If joint working is the norm then there should be joint working when times are tough e.g. when organisations are under scrutiny. It is all too easy for everyone to return to their bunkers and point the finger at someone else.

Should there be an issue with an individual member of the SWAPP Programme this should be dealt with jointly by the two organisations involved. Recent legal judgements suggest that both organisations have a duty of care in these circumstances.

A recent case illustrates the kinds of problems that can arise. Selwood v Durham CC (the employer) and 2 NHS Trusts, Court of Appeal 2012, involved an individual with mental health problems. He stated in a consultation session with a mental health professional that he was threatening to kill a senior social worker (Selwood) involved with the safeguarding and care of his children. This information was not shared with the social work team and the senior social worker was attacked with a knife by the individual concerned. The case concerned whether the NHS trusts involved had a duty of care to the social worker and whether the information about this threat was appropriate to be shared bearing in mind medical confidentiality and data protection considerations. The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal by the social worker against a County Court ruling that the case should be

struck out, and remitted the case back for trial on the facts of the case as to whether there was an immediate threat to the worker concerned.

Welfare, Sickness and Stress

Provisions should be in place to support staff in times of sickness and when absent through stress and other mental health conditions. How these are carried out will also have an effect on those who display good health and attendance. Supporting staff should be a key part of service delivery to users. If you look after the staff they will in turn look after the service users. Whilst stress is often individualised it can be a reflection of how the organisation is functioning.

Both managers and colleagues should be on the lookout for signs of any member of staff suffering from stress and depression in particular as these conditions may take time to address. The earlier these are picked up the easier it becomes to put into place solutions to ease the problem and aid the person's recovery. They may also be symptoms of wider organisational difficulties. For example stress is often individualised without recognition of the organisational context that is creating it.

Sourcing Supernumerary Capacity and Backfill Arrangements

A SWAP programme is unlikely to be effective if the participating managers are not enabled to spend time in a peer authority through not being covered in their home organisation.

It will be no easy task to provide resources to cover SWAP programme participants working in other organisations. The following suggestions are offered for consideration and there may be others which are specifically applicable in local circumstances.

Asking Colleagues to Cover

Clearly this will have its limits but should not be ignored as an option. It will clearly be applicable for absences of short duration but nonetheless needs to be established with clear parameters so that both parties involved understand what it is they are signing up to.

Bringing Back Retirees

There may be recently retired staff who are happy work on an infill basis. They will need to be chosen carefully and be given clear parameters about what they are being asked to do and for what length of time. Obviously there are financial implications in following this option.

Acting Up Arrangements

A option might be to temporarily recruit another member of staff to take on a managerial role. Again there will be financial implications in this option.

Use of Agency staff

This may not be an option for all areas as it will depend on availability. Usually agency staff are not cheap and the individuals may be being paid a lot less than the organisation is being charged. Nonetheless it may be an effective option for some organisations. With this option there will be a contract drawn up which identifies what the staff are going to be asked to do and what the arrangements are for dealing with any problems and issues.

A Regional Infill Contract

In may be appropriate in some regions to organise cover on a regional basis. Organisations would need to bid for such contracts and a supplier or suppliers would then be chosen. Care would be needed to ensure that enough staff are available to

cover all participating local authorities.

Summary

- Management and HR professionals should work together to ensure that HR processes underpin what the organisation is trying to achieve;
- The approach to appraisal and the review and improvement of staff performance should reflect the aspirations of child care work. Commitments made on training and support should be honoured;
- Recruitment, selection and promotion should take place on true merit and for no other reason;
- Grievance and disciplinary processes should be activated early to nip problems in the bud, and in the latter case to deal with staff from all agencies working together in a like manner and time scale;
- The way in which staff are treated when unwell, either physically or mentally ill, can have a positive impact on those who are fit.
- Provision should be made for covering or backfilling those who are seconded to other authorities by a suitable means which enables them to fulfil their roles.

References

Abbott, P, and Fellows, D, (2012) Missing Links - Building truly interconnected organisations delivers better results, ARCH - Achieving Real Change 2012.

Links to the Role of the Principal Social Worker

Considers the role of the Principal Social Worker and how this links with the SWAPP.

The review of Child Protection by Professor Munro referred to the need to create new roles aimed at strengthening social work professionalism and raising standards of practice. Firstly through the appointment of a Chief Social Worker who would advise the government on social care matters as well as appointing Principal Social Workers in every Local Authority to act as the voice of front-line workers. The creation of Principal Social Work roles is seen as essential to a wider evolution in the career pathway of a Social Worker. Instead of being directed towards management, Munro argued that there should be scope for Social Workers to develop and progress through roles which retain their skills and expertise within the context of supporting the front-line and providing a voice with senior management. Munro noted that decisions about budgets taken at the top, for instance, could have a disproportionate effect on child and family social workers on the front line.

This section reflects on the potential for the role of the Principal Social Worker in developing these expectations within the context of the SWAP programme and builds on earlier sections on systemic underpinnings of learning organisations which draw on and develop the practice wisdom of the workforce. In this sense, the Principal Social Worker might be seen as a lynchpin or boundary spanner, to support and help navigate the systems concept of feedback loops which promotes learning within the organisation in a way which demonstrates commitment to developing a listening and learning approach.

The leadership and advocacy role of the

Principal Social Worker should help to facilitate how broader policies and practice are developed locally in response to emerging imbalances and problems by reducing centralised control and helping to return professional decision making to the local system.

To be effective, the changes Munro proposed will need to be locally driven. This not only requires a model and approach to leadership based on distributed or participative styles but a strong commitment to the workforce which facilitates professional autonomy and accountability.

In early 2013 The College of Social Work undertook a survey of how the Principal Social Worker role was being developed and a number of suggestions were captured which could be incorporated into its design such as considering:

- The degree of autonomy given and how the role bridges both frontline operational practice and senior management aspects, given that this role is seen as suitable for very experienced managers in children's services.
- The importance of working with existing systems, particularly those around workforce development and learning systems.
- Having access to front line staff using methods such as themed focus groups and surveys, undertaking social work health checks, and engaging with observation, shadowing and joint working in specific areas.
- Networking opportunities for example by using online communities of interest and practice.
- Developing a local job description and some national guidance so that the role can be more clearly and transparently implemented and evaluated.

There is little doubt that being effective in

the role of Principal Social Worker requires the ability to communicate effectively with different types of individuals and groups, assess situations strategically, analyse the different motivations and goals of different people or stakeholders involved and to try and find mutually satisfactory solutions.

Relationship based practice will be central to this role alongside the development of political skills (with a small 'p'). These are essential to be able to work positively with the power dynamics that affect the development, maintenance and mobilisation of effective partnerships and collaborations such as those described in the other sections of this reference document. Reisch and Jani (2012) have observed that political skills can help to determine the roles that social workers and service users play in the helping process; the different forms of authority which exist within Children's Services; the degree of influence individuals and groups possess in shaping policy goals and any change programme objectives. Being politically astute requires being able to determine what information is shared, how, and with whom, and the vocabulary used within the organisation that describes the service transaction itself (p.1134).

Social Work Experts as Leaders – Benefits and Motivations

Appointing a leader of Children's Services with relevant social work expertise which spans both management and practice may bring several key benefits:

- Credibility inside the organisation and externally, particularly in relationship to the Chief Social Worker;
- Being more able to hold professionals to account within the organisation alongside a good system of support and collaboration;
- A strong role model and reference point for social workers and other professionals at all levels.

Gifford and Finney (2011) however have identified that promoting such professional expertise is more an enabler, by helping others to establish themselves as leaders, than an essential attribute of leadership and so, they assert, the relevance should decline as other leaders develop and progress This is the very essence of participative leadership (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2008), which also makes a significant contribution towards collaboration and collectivist approaches by promoting the principles of social justices within communities and society. Boundaries between followership can also become blurred and make way for the leadership roles taken by service users/carers and other professionals during the learning and development processes.

For a Principal Social Worker, there are both motivations and disincentives from stepping into the professional leadership role. Besides raising the profile of social work expertise and practice know-how, a particular driver will be the ability to broaden one's sphere of influence particularly where there is lack of value placed on leadership as an activity. A significant feature of participative leadership is a willingness to challenge rigidity or narrow thinking to develop new perspectives and this means that anyone within the organisation can take on this role as long as it is recognised, encouraged, facilitated and supported.

The SWAP programme is ultimately about transformation. We have seen that this is very much associated with leading change and organisational development, both essential ingredients in being able to achieve transformation. Mezirow (1991) was a key observer on how learning transforms the way we think and differentiates between transformational and informational learning. Learning that involves us in changing the way we think about things will also challenge our frame of reference, and if we are successful in this, can lead to our

thinking and feelings being transformed. This is demonstrated in theories about organisational loops of learning:

- Single loop learning: are we doing things right? For example this might be about ensuring existing standards are being met and pursing a steady course.
- Double-loop learning; are we doing the right things? By calling into question the very nature of the course plotted and the feedback loops used to maintain that course for example by developing new and innovative models of service and the redesign of services from grass roots.
- Triple-loop learning: why should we be doing it that way? Here, the role of the Principal Social Worker is crucial by paying attention to the system of power alluded to earlier and having an influence and transparency in allowing conflict and debate to emerge and different viewpoints to be challenged and managed. The approach to triple-loop learning therefore is one which allows new approaches to emerge, acknowledges the importance of power relationships and capitalises on transformational leadership styles.

Thinking about the role of the Principal Social Worker in the SWAP programme and the debates about the role nationally as it develops will force us to look at the knowledge hierarchy in children's services differently.

Exploiting learning capacity within organisations is dependant on the organisations ability to learn about the context of its learning. This means being able to identify when and how organisations learn and when and how they do not, and then adapt accordingly. We have to make a commitment to all stakeholders within social care by researching and developing knowledge from the perspective of the practitioner and user/carer and by having the courage to conceptualise our practice

in professional rather than in managerial terms, as performance management does not always sit comfortably with its core values and the learning process. Thus successful SWAP programmes will also facilitate building on experiences of learning to develop and test new learning strategies. This can be thought of as learning about learning or meta-learning. It should be emphasised here that learning is not always about acquisition. Much of social care is actually based on custom and practice or on following government strategies and guidance rather than on evidence itself (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2008).

The use of leadership to reassert the importance of learning in social work practice and social care can help staff and stakeholders to be more critically reflective and serious in pursuing some of the aspirations of Munro and the systemic and relationship-based approach. Social workers will have to develop their practice in the face of political, professional and organisational environments that can enable as well as disable progress. The dilemma is deceptively simple; how can a more progressive form of practice be developed within the drivers around us in a way that makes much of its rhetoric a reality? This responsibility would seem to sit with the role of the Principal Social Worker in Children's Services and their commitment to develop knowledge and skills and practice along with users/, carers and other significant people, who with the appropriate support and encouragement, can take a lead role in the development of excellent practice.

Summary

Organisations need to:

- Consider the links between SWAPP, the Principal Social Worker and organisational learning;
- Recognise the importance of Principal

Social Worker in facilitating how complimentary broader policies and practice are developed;

• Consider the need for political skill and leadership in the Principal Social Worker role.

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Links to the Role of Leadership Teams and Key Groups

SWAPP initiatives will have limited impact if they are not linked to the political processes, senior leadership, strategic planning processes and strategic governance and planning groups.

The SWAP programme is intended to address the imperative to develop a sustainable approach to improving the overall quality of frontline social work practice. Achieving such improvement, or sustaining existing good practice, is a mission critical task for all local authorities in England.

There are perhaps two over arching reasons why improving social work practice is important. The most important is the ethical responsibility carried by those in political and professional leadership roles to ensure that the public services which they lead and manage are effective in protecting vulnerable children who are at risk of harm. Another is the reputational risk for the organisation when things go wrong and the long term impact that this can have. The impact includes the negative publicity that surrounds critical serious case reviews or poor inspection findings. The systemic organisational impact of such events can be very damaging to organisations and because of the negative downward spirals that are often created can be difficult for the organisation and leadership to recover from.

The SWAP programme is intended to use the skills and knowledge of frontline managers to support front-line service improvement. It also has the intent to develop the skills and knowledge of these front-line managers which will also aid improvement. As you will have realised if you have read earlier sections of this practice guide, the authors are of the view that

implementing and being involved in SWAPP is a complex and possibly challenging task for both the organisations who are involved and the individual managers. If SWAP programmes are to be effective and achieve the desired organisational change they will need to be implemented with the active support and understanding of those groups and individuals who are in leadership positions. Consequently SWAPP needs to be supported and understood within the authority by the:

• Political leadership;
• Key strategic groups; and,
• Senior leadership team.

In order for this to be achieved the senior leadership team will be responsible for ensuring that information about the SWAP programme is disseminated effectively and that the organisation is prepared and able to respond effectively. A key aspect of managing such a process will be ensuring that the agency and critical partners are open to learning. In that regard it will be important for senior managers to model that they are open to critique of their agency processes and practice and create the conditions for organisational learning. Other sections of this guide that are relevant in this regard are:

• Overcoming Defensive Responses;
• SWAPP as an Organisational Learning Process;
• System Conditions for SWAPP Success: and,
• Creating Double Loop Learning.

However to summarise aspects of the above. If the individuals within the organisation are defensive and the organisational dynamic creates defensive routines then it will be difficult to create the conditions for organisational learning. The underlying desire is to create double loop learning. Learning that goes beyond improving existing processes and practice and where the

assumptions underlying these processes and practice can be challenged and changed. A key responsibility of the political and senior leadership are managing these processes.

Organisational change programmes often focus on what's wrong and what needs fixing. The sections of the Reference Document on Acting as a Consultant and Change Agent and High Performing Social Work Services both argue for the need to adopt an appreciative approach. As Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard Mohr (undated), reflect:

> *Organizations, ... are not "problems to be solved" but are centers of infinite human capacity-ultimately unpredictable, unknowable, or, a "mystery alive. They offer the hypothesis that human systems grow in the direction of what people study, therefore, let us all search for the true, the good, the better and the possible in human systems."*

Appreciative Inquiry has become established as an approach to organisational development. Taking an appreciative approach which draws upon the underlying thinking within Appreciative Inquiry will be an important position for senior leadership to adopt in order that change is built on existing strengths and is a positive process that is not driven simply by the need to address organisational deficits. It is also an approach that can address the negative spiral that organisations risk falling into following failures such as negative inspections or critical serious case reviews.

An important member of the senior leadership team with regard to SWAPP is the Principal Social Worker. They are likely to be closely involved with the SWAP programme. Their role is addressed more fully with the Reference Guide in the section on Links to the Role of the Principal Social Worker. One of the key suggestions within that section is that the Principal Social Worker might be

seen *as a lynchpin or boundary spanner, to support and help navigate the systems concept of feedback loops which promotes learning within the organisation.* Another area which is addressed within that section are the power dynamics which need to be considered within the Principal Social Work role and which are inherent within the SWAP programme.

The successful journey of the child is now seen as a critical determinant of the effectiveness of local systems. Given that the child can journey through a range of services, (e.g. schools, GP practices and criminal justice agencies), it will be important that there is commitment across the agencies to SWAPP. Consideration should therefore be given to how SWAPP connects with and is reported to:

• Children's Trust or children's partnership groups;
• The Local Safeguarding Children Board;
• The Health and Wellbeing Board: and,
• The Youth Offending Team Board.

Within these discussions and subsequent feedback on SWAPP, areas where it may be important to focus will include;

• The reality of practice at the front line;
• The inter-agency processes and how they impact on practice (the child's journey);
• What the agency collective needs to do to reduce risk and improve the outcomes for children;
• The creation of inter-organisational learning.

Given that a key purpose of SWAPP is improving frontline safeguarding practice, the LSCB will need to be actively engaged in any SWAPP activity. From a systems perspective the LSCB can be seen as a regulator or governor of the local system. Active involvement in SWAPP will facilitate delivery of the LSCB objectives and functions set out

in Working Together 2013, including:

• Ensuring the effectiveness of what is done to promote the welfare of children in the area;
• Participating in the planning of services for children;
• Assessing the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families;
• Assessing whether LSCB partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations;
• Quality assuring practice.

As has been recognised elsewhere in the Practice Guide the SWAPP managers both internal and external will be well placed to give the political leadership, strategic groups including the LSCB and senior leaders an unambiguous account of the reality of practice at the front door. The external SWAPP manager will usually be less inhibited by power and agency politics and better placed in this regard.

This feedback from SWAPP Managers needs to include both what is being done well and where service improvements need to be made. Undertaken effectively this feedback loop becomes crucially important in creating second order learning and organisational change. This is only likely to be effective if the senior leadership team support the process. For the benefits of SWAPP to be maximised the senior leadership needs to ensure that critical attention is paid to how the SWAPP feedback process takes place and how this is acted upon within the strategic planning processes.

Summary

Leadership teams should:

• Promote the ethical and strategic imperative to improve social work practice;
• Consider their role in the SWAP programme;
• Recognise the need for an appreciative

approach to organisational development;
• Understand that a partnership approach to SWAPP will help with improving the child's journey;
• Receive critical feedback from SWAPP managers.

Resources

Appreciative Inquiry Commons: The "AI Commons" is a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing discipline of positive change. A very useful resource which is the academic home of appreciative inquiry.

References

Magruder, J and Mohr, B, AI History and Timeline. Available at, http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/timeline.cfm accessed 16/2/2012

Development of the Regional SWAPP models

Each of the nine regions in England has developed a Regional Plan in relation to SWAPP. This section draws the common themes from these and outlines some of the ideas included. Comment is made on further considerations which might be needed in carrying out these plans in practice.

Overview

The Regional SWAPP Models were each formulated on the basis that national funding would be available from the Children's Improvement Board (CIB). Withdrawal of funding for the CIB will no doubt impact on these plans. They display a diversity of approaches to the improvement of front line social work practice and its associated management. They are based in part on the known Ofsted ratings for each of the constituent local authorities although the Plans were not all delivered according to the same criteria. Not all authorities have been assessed against the same Ofsted criteria.

What the plans are each grappling with is a lack of infrastructure for meeting the challenge of improvement in child safeguarding and care that are needed. In the absence of central support local authorities' progress now needs to be based on collaboration. The Regional SWAPP Models represent work in progress and are essentially a set of aspirations as to how they can improve. Some are further along the road than others, as no doubt are the individual authorities within each region.

The implications of the Munro Review are profound. At their heart they imply a need to manage the service in an entirely different manner. This requires a significantly different level of energy and commitment at a time when the public sector is under stress due to austerity measures. These in themselves require difficult decisions to be made. To learn a new way of doing things at the same time, further stresses the overall system.

The Regional Models display a range of approaches that includes the following:

- Comprehensive development activities for all those staff within the target group;
- Selecting particular individuals for targeted development who then lead the process of change for the rest; and,
- Using a mixed approach of short term placements, external support, and workforce development.

There is a recognition in some plans that the improvement process will need to be both short term and long term. In some cases reference is made to changes already begun under Sector Led Improvement (SLI) and Peer Challenge. Further progress may be made as SWAPP evolves, and more possibilities may come into play after the first year of the programme as expertise develops, and the pool of experienced managers increases.

There are differences of view about the levels of commitment required from those managers who may be involved in SWAPPing. Some regions believe that SWAPPing is not appropriate for reasons of availability of suitable resources or skills, or geographical separation, and that different approaches are needed which may rely more on making best use of in-house resources. In one case the SWAPPing approach was tried in the past with very limited success because cultural issues were not recognised.

Little comment is made in any of the plans about the kinds of changes needed to implement the Munro Review. This may be because this is implicit in what is written. There is a need to be mindful of the range of issues outlined in this reference document.

This demonstrates the potential complexity of the changes required to achieve the expected benefits.

There is also an absence of comment on the need to extend considerations out into the wider local authority system. It may not just be front line social work practice and management that needs to change, but also the way in which each local authorities corporate mechanisms and infrastructure interface with the service. This may include the way in which corporate plans and performance indicators are structured, or the way in which the legal services, finance and HR operate in relation to child safeguarding and care. Clearly there will be different issues within each local authority in this regard and these may not play simply into a regional framework.

The main issue, as with all change programmes, is how the new way of doing things becomes embedded into normal working. All staff involved in child care and safeguarding need to absorb the new way of doing things so that the champions of the change don't become isolated for whatever reason. Care also needs to be exercised that the rest of the system, within which child safeguarding and care takes place, provides the right kind of reinforcement which ensures that changes continue to apply.

Examples

Highlighted below are a range of measures which various regions have included within their plans. They are included to illustrate the diversity of approaches:

• Communities of Practice – these can become Communities of Learning for both social workers and team leaders and could provide the means for embedding appropriate organisational cultural frameworks.
• SWAPP Champions/Practice Change

Leaders (>1 per local authority) – these can act as the change agents within their organisations to grow improvements in practice.
• Learning & Development Programmes for Managers – these can combine action learning sets, coaching & mentoring, and performance management (linked to PCF), alongside support for internships (as opposed to secondments) and 360 online review. The action learning sets approach could also be applied to social workers.
• Regional Development and Improvement Teams – these can provide a customised response to meet local and regional needs. These would comprise seconded staff with differing types of expertise to enable these needs to be met.
• Centres of Effective Interventions – these are identified individual local authorities who are particularly effective at specific aspects of practice/ management. Sharing this knowledge through a programme of visits, seminars, and possibly coaching/ mentoring.
• Targeted Contributions from Experienced Managers – these would make use of the expertise of existing and retired individuals who could contribute to specific improvement activities needed in specific places on particular subject areas.
• Regional Co-ordinators – these are integral to some regional plans.
• Use of audits – these are for either reviewing the state of play, or to gather additional data and information.
• Use of external expertise – certain regions identify the need to supplement their regional expertise.

These examples illustrate what is so far under consideration. It is clear that there is a struggle in many places to come to terms with what is needed. This may become more difficult when further changes take place as part of the national austerity programme.

Potential Gaps

The following factors from the Reference Document appear not to be fully recognised in the Regional Plans. It is possible that some of these factors are assumed.

A key principle lying behind the SWAPP and peer challenge and support is that of 'a fresh pair of eyes' often has the clearest view of an organisation and its practices. New people are untainted by the history of what has gone on before. They can play a role of critical friend in helping the organisation appreciate where it is and what it might do differently. If secondment in whatever form is not used as part of a region's plans, this valuable opportunity may be lost unless the alternative of additional outside expertise is used.

What takes place in front line social work does so in the context of the organisation's culture which may not be what the organisation believes it to be. Changing it can rarely be achieved by management directive or the use of particular individuals to lead it; what it requires is the involvement of everyone. To improve front line practice and management may require other things in the organisation to change. In particular what outcomes are desired and how these are being assessed. Qualitative measures need to be given equal importance with quantitative ones.

How individuals are treated will have an impact on the sustainability of changes, those being "seconded" may need to be reassured about their employment position. Others may need to be similarly reassured it they are not chosen for specialised roles.

There will be a range of ways in which the Professional Capabilities Framework can be met, and their needs to be sufficient flexibility to allow for an appropriate range of individual styles and approaches to be used in this regard. All social workers do not carry out their tasks in the same way and this diversity of approach needs to be retained to support the delivery of high quality services. It may be that these potential gaps are being addressed in the individual authorities concerned and consequently do not need to be included within regional plan documents.

Conclusion

The tenor of most of the plans is to address specific elements within the service. These include front line practice and management and specific areas of these. None of the plans mentions a systemic approach to improvement.

This begs the question as to whether the central tenet of the Munro Review is yet being met i.e. whether the collective actions and inactions of all those involved in child safeguarding and care form an integrated and effective approach. If Ofsted are making their assessments on a more stringent basis, it may be that gaps will continue to be identified which need to be rectified by regional or local action. In this regard the plans of each of the regions will need to be kept under review.

Summary

- The Regional SWAPP Models display a wide range of approaches. These will need to be reviewed in the light of changed funding arrangements.
- Plans carried forward need to be set within each local authority context as well as that for the region. This section provides a number of options for consideration.
- The central intention is for the SWAP Programme to provide fresh pairs of eyes to aid improvement. Considering the cultural context within which child safeguarding services operate is a key part of the process.

Using SWAPP to Create Strategic Learning and Improve Services

Creating Double Loop Learning

The creation of learning organisations was viewed by Eileen Munro as one of the key aspects of implementing the reforms she proposed. A key aspect of her systems review was of the need to create double loop learning, the learning that changes how the organisation functions.

Argyris and Schön (1996) refer to having borrowed the concept of single and double loop learning from the work of W. Ross Ashby who in Design for a Brain (1960), a book on cybernetics, distinguishes between the adaptive feedback of a stable system (single loop learning) and when the environment changes the more occasional feedback (double loop learning) which can change the system. Umpleby (2008) comments on Ashby's adaptive theory and that:

> The first feedback loop enables an organism or organization to learn a pattern of behavior that is appropriate for a particular environment. The second feedback loop enables the organism to perceive that the environment has changed and that learning a new pattern of behavior is required.

This reveals the origin of the concept of single and double loop learning in systems thinking. The importance of promoting double loop learning was a key feature of the first volume of the Munro Review of Child Protection. Relying on the work of Ashby, Argyris and Schön, Munro (2010) compares single loop learning to a compliance or atomistic approach to learning. Munro also comments that this:

> ... can be contrasted with the broader, more reflective learning approach that is a characteristic of holistic thinking. This is double loop learning, in which the question that is being asked is: have we specified the right thing to do?

Drawing on the work of Peter Drucker, Munro (2010) described single loop learning as a concern with doing things right versus a concern for doing the right thing. The trap of doing things right, seems to have snared those public services who have been driven by central prescription and targets creating a mind-set of compliance to prescribed process. This in turn risks creating a false sense of security about the effectiveness of services and erodes organisational adaption creativity and learning. You may find it worthwhile to review Appendix 2 of the Munro Review Part one and in particular Appendix 2 *Applying systems thinking ideas to child protection* including the diagrams that Munro offers.

It could be argued that one of the reasons so many authorities are fairing badly from the new Ofsted inspection framework on Local Authority Arrangements to Protect Children is because they have failed to learn from the changes to the environment in which they are now operating. In other words they have not responded as adaptive and learning organisations, they have not been able to challenge their own thinking, their ways of operating and acting and have failed to create double loop learning. The risk for organisations that fail to adapt to a changed

environment is that they cease to exist. We are currently seeing examples where the traditional delivery of children's social care services through local authority departments is being challenged. A prominent example is the government response to the Carlile report into The Eddlington Case which may lead to an independent organisation, delivering children's social care services.

The SWAP programme has the potential to be one of the mechanisms that increase the ability of children's services to learn. A classic definition of a learning organisation is an organisation that has learnt how to learn (Senge 1990). If organisational learning is one of the keys to better outcomes for children and essential organisational survival then it becomes important to harness the potential that SWAPP and similar programmes offer in order to create double loop learning. This in turn can help to create the required changes in behaviour that will help the organisation to adapt and meet the needs of children more effectively.

Ways of Understanding Double Loop Learning

Double loop learning can be usefully re-framed within the culture and language of social work. There is a significant parallel between creating double loop learning and with the idea of reflective practice. However, Robert Adams makes the point that *it is not sufficient to be reflective. We need to use the understanding that we gain from reflection to achieve change* (Adams, 2004). So, critically reflective practice can be seen a form of double loop learning. Adams goes on to argue that critical practitioners whilst *deeply involved* need to develop the ability to be *detached* from the situation with the ability to move between an *insider* and an *outsider* position. Payne, Adams and Dominelli (2002), describe the cycle by which *critical thinking leads to critical action, forming*

critical practice. Workers are engaged in a process of reflexivity, *thinking and acting with the people they are serving, so that their understandings and actions are inevitably changed by their experiences with others*. Importantly this recognises that the individual is also changed though the reflective or reflexive process.

Viewed in this way the creation of double loop learning can also be defined as the creation of organisational reflexivity. Margaret Archer (2007) defines reflexivity as the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa. Management can also be seen as reflexive activity. The UK Work Organisation Network (UKWON) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) (2013) see reflexivity as important to resilience and organisational sustainability. They give the following definition of organisational reflexivity:

> *Reflexivity in the organisational context means the ability to reflect about and anticipate the impacts of change. Good and sustainable organisations build a set of reflexive mechanisms inside their organisation, they embed them in the organisation to enable smooth transitions. Reflexivity also focuses on the need to bring the thinking and active subject (employee) into the centre of work practices, to underline the importance of continuing learning and the necessity to prioritise personnel's tacit and explicit knowledge if the organisation is to be sustainable in the long run.*

What the above usefully does is to link the individual and their tacit and explicit knowledge to the development of learning and organisational sustainability, this can be seen to be at the centre of the SWAP programme. However, as the quote above recognises creating reflexivity or double loop
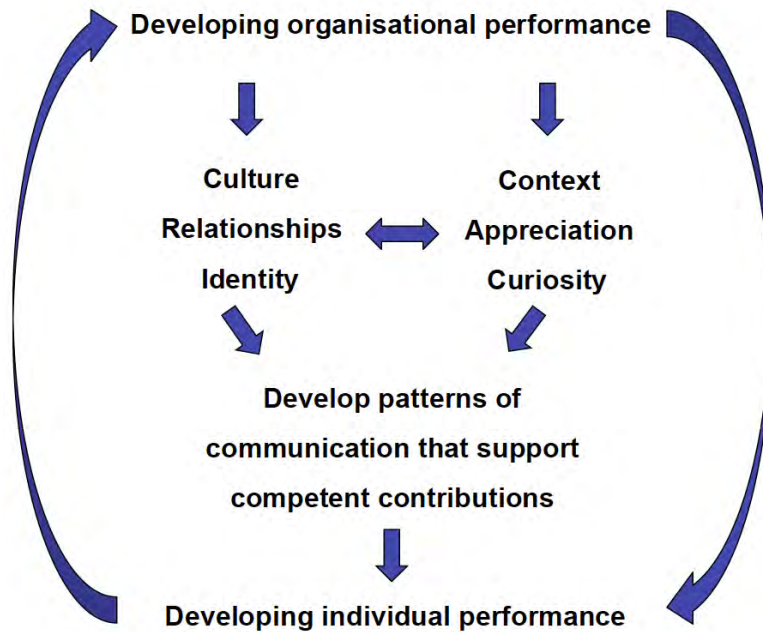
Figure 16: Developing Strategic Organisational Reflexivity
Reproduced with permission of Christine Oliver and Carsten Hornstrup

learning requires senior leadership to ensure that the organisation create the mechanisms for learning and change. Christine Oliver and Carsten Hornstrup (2009) offer the model shown overleaf which shows the dependencies between individual and organisational performance required in order to create strategic reflexivity.

Acting to Create Learning

From the model we can see that there is the need for the organisations involved to explore and then exploit the knowledge that will be gained from SWAPP managers in order to maximise the organisational learning that can be accrued from the SWAP programme. There is also a need for the SWAPP managers to take responsibility for both for their own learning and how this feeds into organisational learning and change processes.

At the core of the model above is the development of patterns of communication that support competent contributions. This might be seen as the key challenge

in creating double loop learning from the SWAPP. It will not be sufficient for organisations just to swap managers. To gain organisational benefit and create learning and change will require careful thought to be given as to how the learning gained is disseminated, understood and importantly acted upon. This will be the process of creating double loop learning.

The above will be developed in local programmes within seminars and other forms of meetings and it will be for the organistions concerned to determine the detail of such meetings. However, in order maximise the opportunity for learning and support competent contributions these meetings will need to be created as reflective spaces where the opportunities for learning are maximised.

UKWON and the CBI in the quote above recognise the importance of both tacit and explicit knowledge. The term tacit knowledge emanates from the work of Michael Polanyi who coined the phrase *We know more than we can tell*. Tacit knowledge is sometimes

referred to as process or implicit knowledge, it a form of knowledge that lies beneath the surface and that we don't always realise we have. Surfacing tacit knowledge is however vital in understanding how organisational processes and practices are carried out and in improving them.

We need to find ways understand and use this tacit knowledge to inform how we strategically develop services and indeed respond effectively to the reality of delivering more for less. The need to draw on the tacit knowledge of the workforce has been recognised in many business organisations who have moved away from a command and control position and recognised that the knowledge of their workforce is their most intangible yet valuable asset which needs to be harnessed to develop their business.

As was established earlier in the section on Overcoming Defensive Responses, individual and organisational defensiveness is a major inhibitor to learning, because defensiveness prevent underlying assumptions and norms being challenged. If the organisations concerned want to maximise the learning from SWAPP they will need to work to lower the defensive responses that inhibit learning and be prepared for their underlying assumptions to be challenged. The earlier chapter on Overcoming Defensive Responses looks in greater detail at some of the ways defensive responses can be reduced.

There is however something in common both in how we surface tacit knowledge and in how we reduce defensive responses. This by paying attention to how we communicate when we are dealing with complex and contentious issues. Both surfacing tacit knowledge and reducing defensive responses are best achieved by creating reflective space where dialogical forms of communication are encouraged.

The chapter titled Managing in Complexity Working with Emergence draws on the work of David Bohm (1996) and argues that in dealing with complexity we need to create dialogue. Dialogue is achieved in conversations which are not about winning and losing points with one person being right and the other being proved wrong but where there is a joint responsibility to seek common understanding.

Creating reflective dialogue with SWAPP managers and within and between the organisations involved with SWAPP will be an essential aspect of creating both individual and organisational learning. Done effectively it has the potential to create double loop learning.

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Evaluation of SWAPP as a Catalyst for Strategic Improvement

This section views SWAPP learning within a complex adaptive organisation context where change may not be linear, continuous or the impacts apparent in some or many parts of the system. These aspects will need to be included in evaluation of the benefits of SWAPP and integrated in terms of changes in individual, team as well as in organisational and wider system capacity.

Evaluation can be defined as a systematic determination of merit, worth and significance. But, evaluation on its own is worthless, it only has value when we use it to reflect and learn. This then allows us take further action questioning what else we need to do and think about, which then allows us to focus on future service improvement.

The value of the effort involved in SWAPP activity and project work can be assessed in relation to its local organisational context and its value in generating wider detailed feedback. The benefits of SWAPP may accrue to various individuals and local groups including governing groups which can include fresh orientations to services to children and families. Further, the impact at different levels may arise from the experience of attempting improvement and to do things differently rather than achieving specific objectives or better performance results.

It will be of benefit for each SWAPP manager to evaluate their experience and learning in the mode of participant observer throughout the placement. In this way material about individual impact and learning as well as wider regional and sector feedback and awareness of contextual issues can be fed back and assimilated. All the phases of evaluation are relevant.

Preparation: Where individual decisions, thinking and negotiation about selection for SWAPP are made.

Contracting: Where specific joining is arranged as well as assignments considered involving identifying learning goals. This will include the nature of the contracting and the process of being invited into teams as well as the wider receiving authority system.

Project Work: Where access to data and systems is agreed and organised. Where engagement with process, practice and information about outcomes takes place. Where wider engagement with significant other individuals and groups also takes place. Where action learning sets can be formed and where learning and reflection about improvement may be focussed. Additionally the nature of support, supervision and leadership can also be reflected upon.

Preparing for Exit: This can include how work has been ended and what handover has been agreed. It will also include feedback and project material created from the project.

Exiting: This is an important stage where evaluation of the whole experience can be considered in more depth. In addition to identifying and creating a narrative about personal learning and in particular changes in perspective and understanding, contribution to the narrative about sector learning can also be considered. This may include feedback to the wider system and region about the ongoing improvement challenge and include the development of further sector improvement questions.

Wider Organisational Considerations

In addition to the SWAPP focus on the functioning of a service and effectiveness of practice and further in addition to a focus on the influence of the local organisational

context and configuration, a systems approach will consider the system and relationships created between the SWAPP manager, receiving and potentially also placing authority. Here there is potential for deeper learning from the communication about culture and in particular negative and emotionally charged aspects such as fear of change and anxiety which may have long local histories.

Thus evaluative information and feedback about SWAPP is an important part of the learning and development of regional and national children's services systems. We have previously indicated how evaluation will have advocates with both positive and negative investments. The inclusive perspectives and actions of the leadership groups particularly at a local level will therefore be significant in an ongoing support for effective children's services improvement work as well as keeping groups in touch with key local work which is not getting done.

This document has included reference material for developing the individual SWAPP manager and participating SWAPP teams to generate experiences, understandings and insights and to facilitate more open and self aware organisational systems and promote *whole system* change. A *systems thinking* approach identifies systemic tasks for leadership groups to enable changes to culture and to sustain improvement behaviours via new meanings and shared values.

Annabelle Beerel (2009) has described how effective and ethical leadership plays a key role in mobilising others to face new realities and change. New realities will mean navigating gains and losses for individuals as well as parts of the organisation and wider relationships across agencies, understanding the stresses involved and the longer term process of influencing necessary change versus making short term fixes.

However, organisational dynamics and culture can also serve to support a false sense of reality, where leaders can be seduced by a sense of power and be unable to recognise personal anxieties, inadequacies and limitations. In a chronic organisational climate, activity may be unconsciously directed by fear and fear of change, approach and avoidance behaviours which typically also include selective, partial and fragmented responses and where superstitious beliefs about policy and policy implementation will persist.

The responsibility of leadership is to be aware of how organisational dynamics and the behaviour of leaders are linked in a relationship. The challenge is to make constructive intervention to get the local system to face the new realities. This may mean finding ways to refresh an understanding of purpose and for example place a new emphasis on developing professional capabilities and judgement which can be relied upon. This can include design, teaching, supervision and coaching work to fit with updated understandings and a collective stewardship of the adaptive and learning local authority

The environmental drivers towards increased multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working will also be part of developing a more 'local' approach and will increasing be based on identifying particular opportunities with community resources, leadership and joint commissioning. This can be an effective part of an *outside-in* learning frame of reference which could also mean more explicit responses to local socio-economic history appropriately supported by local and national policy. Local authorities may then develop very distinct services and identity as interaction, feedback and partnerships with the community mature, identifying unique local strengths and aspirations and ways to communicate and build on these.

These changes are more likely to flourish in a distributed leadership environment and where high quality professional relationships with users are continually maintained via a recognised image, shared values, expectations and experience of local children's services. The experience of diversity and good practice across authorities in a region can thus create new meanings and impetus for improvement activity in the future.

This means using the SWAPP experience to identify and challenge assumptions about how things are working, experimenting, collecting evidence in context, pursuing and completing action learning, reflecting on resistance and organisation behaviour and relationships. It also means having the courage to play a part in creating and maintaining the ongoing conditions for improvement. However, the challenge is finding ways to influence real world systems, build on insights and learning generated by SWAPP and shared vision and understanding about the capacity of children services to adapt.

Summary

It will be of benefit for each SWAPP manager to evaluate their experience and learning in the mode of participant observer throughout the placement.

The value of the SWAPP activity and project work can be assessed in relation to its local organisational context and its value in generating wider feedback.

A systems approach will consider the system and relationships created between the SWAPP manager, host and placing authority.

Organisational dynamics and culture can serve to support a false sense of reality, where leaders can be seduced by a sense of power.

The responsibility of leadership is to be aware of how organisational dynamics and the behaviour of leaders are linked in a relationship.

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Emerging Evidence From Peer Challenge and Peer Review Evaluations

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) have undertaken two evaluations of peer review and peer challenge process on behalf of the Children's Improvement Board and partners. The first of these was on *The longer-term impact of safeguarding children peer reviews* and the second and most recent was on *Evaluation of the sector-led peer challenge programme*.

Whilst there are clear differences between peer review and peer challenge and the SWAP programme, there are also some clear parallels. For those involved in developing or involved as SWAPP managers the evaluation findings are worth considering. The following findings are directly quoted from the NFER reports and have been selected as having most significance for the SWAP programme.

Peer Challenge Programme

The evaluation was undertaken by analysis of regional delivery plans and telephone interviews with all lead-DCSs; lead-lead members; lead-chief executives; programme managers and a nominated assistant director from a council in each region. A total of 43 telephone interviews were undertaken in December 2012 and January 2013.

Context

In 2011, the Local Government Association (LGA) agreed to oversee whole council approaches to self- improvement in line with the Coalition Government's drive towards localism. The peer challenge programme is an integral part of the sector-led improvement programme. Since its inception the peer challenge programme has evolved. The programme has moved from a centrally run system to one where each of the nine regions in England has developed its own model for delivery.

Quotes from Participants

It is always interesting to go to another authority and see how they do things and you always bring back something that is helpful to your authority ... it is a really good way of learning.

The best training I have ever had is doing the peer review work ... You get people into your authority who are really good and know what they're doing, but equally those people get really good broadening and training which in turn helps them to do their job better.

Evaluation Extracts

It was generally recognised that involving lead members in the peer challenge process provided them with an opportunity to give a political steer into the region's overall areas of strategic challenge.

Interviewees reported that DCSs and council leaders were crucial in setting an example for the peer challenge programme within their council. Their engagement set the precedence for personnel working in the council. Strategic buy-in was facilitated by DCSs collaborating early on and owning the programme.

Unanimously, interviewees agreed that the

peer challenge programme had helped foster a culture of trust, openness and transparency. Interviewees felt that the peer challenge had helped to embody a cultural shift from competition to collaboration between councils.

In all regions a rationale, however loose, was applied for making the judgements for matching councils. Interviewees noted that this was not always an easy task and that it took time.

Interviewees from most regions identified that the peer challenge had effectively identified councils in need of early support. Furthermore, it had helped a small number of councils recognise specific areas of declining or concerning performance.

There was an overwhelming perception that the peer challenge programme offers value for money. Indeed, not one interviewee questioned its cost-effectiveness. It was considered particularly cost-effective due to the training and development experience that it affords participating staff, thus building internal capacity and capability.

Self-assessment activity was perceived to be critical to the success of the programme. Regions shared a strong desire to have access to accurate and timely information so they could better identify and support individual councils on their improvement journey.

It was clear that further work needs to be done nationally and locally to clarify how information collected as part of the peer challenge process should or would be used. Interviewees reported concern about whether Ofsted would have access to peer challenge findings resulting in some employing caution when challenge teams offered feedback to host councils.

Interviewees from across the nine regions recognised the need to further develop partner agency engagement in the peer challenge in the future.

Managers and front line staff had gained broader learning of how other councils operate. This was said to be transferable to their own council and would enhance their own performance and practice in future.

Interviewees talked of the immense value of receiving a peer challenge but also of being involved in a challenge team. Not only did they value getting together with colleagues to share practice, they also felt that they learned from being a member of a peer challenge team. Being a peer challenge team member often clarified individuals' own insights into issues in their council through the process of helping others.

Some interviewees highlighted the need to coach those directly involved in the peer challenge visits to ensure that they approached the task with the necessary skill, tact and sensitivity.

Safeguarding Peer Reviews

The LGA recruited five LAs who were at different stages of intervention and who had received a safeguarding peer review, to take part in this study. The LAs comprise three counties, a metropolitan and a unitary. A total of 25 telephone interviews were conducted with a selection of local authority officers, councillors and staff from partner organisations. Interviews were carried out in January and February 2012.

Context

Peer reviews are used by local authorities in intervention to benchmark safeguarding performance and assess progress against targets and performance indicators set out in improvement plans and inspection reports.

For local authorities in intervention, a key aim of the peer review relates to the need for independent external feedback on the adequacy and effectiveness local safeguarding services from peers with safeguarding experience and expertise. The neutrality and objectivity of the peer review team means that their perspectives are used to validate the findings of internal reviews and self-assessments of local safeguarding services.

Quotes from Participants

It's very, very detailed, very interrogatory, in an unthreatening way and a different feeling to an inspection which it obviously isn't. It's designed to be helpful rather than seeking things that they can trap you with.
(Head of Children and Families)

Having (name of authority) here meant there was a certain level of empathy in the feedback and delivery which was good. You wouldn't get that if they'd not been in the same place once upon a time. The behaviour and the empathy displayed by the team was fantastic. Had an outstanding authority come in and judged us based on their perspective of where we were and where we need to be, it would have felt much more negative.
(Head of HR)

We didn't go into it in defensive mode, we went into it with a view that this was going to be the best consultancy we were going to get, and the best opportunity to get a real assessment about whether the things that we were doing were going to improve outcomes.
(Head of HR)

Evaluation Extracts

The children's services sector view a safeguarding peer review as a positive experience and local authority personnel who have participated in the peer review programme highly recommend it to others.

For some authorities, a particularly effective feature of the safeguarding peer review methodology is the requirement that peers verbally present the findings and recommendations of the review to a wide range of staff at a formal feedback session. The review lead, for example, might present difficult messages that are challenging for the local authority to voice publicly.

All local authorities shared their peer review findings with their Improvement Board, which has DfE representation. Furthermore, some DCSs have used the peer review findings in reports to the Minister and others have shared the findings with Ofsted.

Partner agency and voluntary sector representation on the peer review team is considered to be particularly important. Not only is it crucial to gain their perspectives of local safeguarding performance, but their presence also helps to secure the buy-in of local partners in the review process.

Where reviews work well, peers are committed to the core principles and purpose of safeguarding peer reviews, they are well trained, prepared and familiar with local authority data and self-assessment materials in advance, and are dedicated, flexible and understanding during the on- site visit. … Ensuring that the review team acts as a 'critical friend' to the local authority, rather than forming or delivering a judgement is crucial.

One of the main themes emerging from the data is the positive impact that the peer review has on the attitudes and confidence

of LA staff (from corporate leaders to frontline staff), partner organisations, Improvement Boards and local safeguarding boards. … The external validation and the critical and thorough look at the authority's progress to date, boosts the morale, motivation and confidence of many staff.

The format of the peer review, which focuses on asking questions and providing challenge and reflection, results in LAs replicating these qualities. Managers and staff have to 'stop and think' which promotes reflection and outcomes focused behaviours.

Adopt an open approach: be receptive to the scrutiny of peers and encourage staff not to conceal areas of weakness.

Manage the message: envisage how the feedback might be used and potentially misapplied. Be proactive in preparing local authority staff and partner agencies to receive and respond to the review findings with a can-do approach.

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